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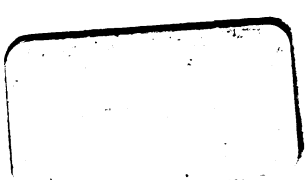

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A

SERIES OF LETTERS

BETWEEN

MRS. ELIZABETH CARTER

AND

MISS CATHERINE TALBOT,

FROM THE YEAR 1741 TO 1770.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

LETTERS

FROM

MRS. ELIZABETH CARTER TO MRS. VESEY,

BETWEEN THE YEARS 1763 AND 1787;

PUBLISHED FROM THE

ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS IN THE POSSESSION

OF THE

REV.ᵈ MONTAGU PENNINGTON, M.A.

VICAR OF NORTHBOURN, IN KENT, HER NEPHEW AND EXECUTOR.

We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God as friends.

PSALM lv. Old Version.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

AFTER what was said in the Memoirs of Mrs. Carter's Life concerning the dislike which she expressed of the injudicious publication of confidential Letters, it may perhaps be deemed necessary for the Editor to give some reason for the exception which he has thought proper to make with respect to the following Correspondence. It was certainly his original wish and intention that none of Mrs. Carter's Letters should be printed but those which are inserted in the Memoirs; and he made that request accordingly to some of her surviving friends, who are still in possession of her Letters.

But the Letters which were published in the Memoirs were thought so excellent, that the Editor was assailed from all quarters with the most pressing solicitations to give more of them to the public. Every motive was urged, and every argument that was likely to have any force. And some of these, he well knew, would have had great weight with Mrs. Carter herself. It was said, that in his hands, who was not likely to publish any thing which his respected relation would have thought improper, the circulation of these Letters could do no harm, and might do much good; that to give the world an innocent as well as en-

gaging amusement could not be wrong; that to use every means of counteracting the general thoughtlessness and luke-warmness of the age with regard to religion was not only right, but even a positive duty. And he was repeatedly asked, not only by the grave, but also by the gay, how he could answer it to his own conscience to withhold from the world so delightful a means of improvement, unless he had positive directions, or had given a promise to that effect.

Neither of these were the case: Mrs. Carter neither required a promise from him, nor gave him any directions about her Letters, but that he would dispose of them according as they were labelled; some to be destroyed, and others to be returned to the writers if living, or, in some instances, to their representatives. This was of course complied with, but still a great number remained both from and to her, which were left entirely to his discretion; and the only circumstance which made the Editor determine at first that none of them should be printed, was the general disapprobation which Mrs. Carter had often expressed of the publication of Letters without regard to judgment and propriety, or the feelings of those who were mentioned in them, if living, or to those of their relatives, if deceased.

There is reason to hope that the present selection can give no offence in any of these respects; and the Editor is persuaded that Mrs. Carter herself was of that opinion, because the Correspondence between her and Miss Talbot was found regularly arranged and bound up in volumes, with all such names carefully erased by herself as she did not chuse

chuse should appear in them; and the Letters to Mrs. Vesey were left just as she had received them after that lady's decease, with the Letter from Mrs. Vesey still lying upon them, in which she so earneſtly recommends, and from such powerful motives that they should be given to the public. This Letter will be found prefixed to them. It made a strong impression upon the Editor's mind, and he is convinced that if Mrs. Carter had not chosen that he should exercise his own judgment about these and her other Letters, she would either have destroyed them herself, or have given him some directions about them, to which she well knew he would conscientiously attend. But even when he mentioned to her his design of writing some account of her life if he survived her, she only replied by thanking him for his kind intention, "but what," added she, "can be said of so obscure an individual as I am? and what do you think the world will care about me?"

The Editor therefore, having been prevailed on to publish some of her Letters, selected these in particular which now appear; both because they were left in the manner before mentioned, by Mrs. Carter herself, and because the two ladies concerned have now been dead many years; the one unmarried, and the other without leaving any family. They were both also well known and much respected in the world; and as the Letters to Mrs. Vesey begin some years before Miss Talbot's death, they comprise together the whole of that part of Mrs. Carter's life which was passed between the years 1740 and 1788. Nothing has been added to any of the Letters, but a good deal has been left out of trifling chit-chat and confidential communications.

And excepting a very few short passages, necessary for the sake of connection, all those Letters, or extracts from them, which were published in the Memoirs, have been here omitted.

Possibly this last circumstance, which has made frequent references to the Memoirs unavoidable, may be attended with some inconvenience to the reader. It was occasioned by the Editor's anxious wish that the public should not be imposed on, by finding in a new work, Letters which have been printed before. He is sensible how frequent this species of literary dishonesty is become, and therefore prefers that his publication should be thought obscure rather than fraudulent, and to give some little trouble to his readers rather than render himself liable to a similar imputation.

It is much to be lamented that when Mrs. Carter published those Essays of her deceased friend, Miss Talbot, which have been so well received, she had not prefixed to them some account of the early life and education of the amiable and accomplished author. She was then perhaps so well known as to make it needless, but it is not easy now to supply the deficiency. Near forty years have elapsed since her decease, and though some of the friends of her latter days are still living, probably no one now remains who remembers her in her youth.

Miss Catherine Talbot was a posthumous child, born five months after her father's decease. He was second son to the Bishop of Durham, and younger brother to the Lord

Lord Chancellor of that name; and having been introduced to Mr. Secker (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury) he recommended him to his father's patronage on his death-bed. This was the foundation of that distinguished prelate's fortune, and his grateful heart never forgot the obligation. Mr. Talbot died in December 1720; and as soon as Mr. Secker married, which was in 1725, he and Mrs. Secker (Bishop Benson's sister) joined in requesting Mrs. and Miss Talbot to become a part of their family, which they never afterwards left.

These particulars are mentioned in the Bishop of London's Life of his friend and patron, Archbishop Secker; but it was foreign to his Lordship's purpose, if indeed he was acquainted with it, to give any account of Miss Talbot's education. Her mother's name was Martyn, and she was daughter to a Prebendary of Lincoln. She appears to have been a woman of strong understanding, very amiable manners, and excellent religious principles; but her education, however intrinsically good as to the most important points, was certainly not a complete one in the modern sense. She seems to have understood no language but her own, and her Letters prove that she did not write even that very correctly; and there is no reason to suppose that she had gained any of the merely ornamental feminine acquirements.

But in every elegant as well as serious branch of education her daughter was equally accomplished. She had not attained the age of five years when she went to reside with Dr. Secker; and till he was preferred to the see of Bristol

in

in 1734, his family chiefly lived at Durham, where he had a prebendal stall, or in Piccadilly, at his rectory of St. James's.

In all these situations there were abundant opportunities for the cultivation of Miss Talbot's admirable understanding, as well as for the acquirement of those graceful arts which add so high a polish to virtue, but which, where the mind is neglected, so often lead to vice. Her progress in all seems to have been equally rapid, and her knowledge in all that she attempted equally complete. She learnt music both vocal and instrumental; but after her early youth, did not chuse to give up so much time to those delightful amusements as is necessary to make any very considerable proficiency in them. She performed, however, in private concerts occasionally, but never pretended to much skill in the science, nor seemed to be very fond of any but sacred music, in which she took great pleasure. She excelled much more in drawing, and painting in water colours, in which she shewed the taste and the execution of an artist, especially in landscapes, and in painting flowers from nature. In this study she took particular delight; and some of her performances of this kind, which she gave to Mrs. Carter, and which are now in the Editor's possession, have been greatly admired by the best judges.

Whoever reads Miss Talbot's Letters will not need to be told with how much care her religious education was attended to. This first and most important of all sciences seems, from her earliest youth to the day of her death, to have been the dearest object of her constant study, her most

most unremitted application, and her highest pleasure. Later in life certainly her continual ill health, and the duty which she owed to the society in which her situation in the world placed her, prevented her from devoting so much time to mental improvement as she wished to do; and this circumstance she bitterly and often (perhaps it may be thought too often) laments in her Letters to her friend. Yet surely some excuse may be made for the amiable egotist, when it is considered that she was writing to her dearest friend, to whom every circumstance was considered as important that related either to her health or to the cultivation of her faculties. She wrote not to gain credit or applause, but merely what she felt; and when she feared that she had not made a proper use of her opportunities or endowments, she naturally unburdened the fulness of her heart to one whose affection she was well assured would pity, console, and reconcile her to herself. If it be said that some Letters of this kind might have been omitted, the Editor would have done so, had there been any reason to fear the spreading or encouragement of enthusiasm in these days; but when, on the contrary, coldness, lukewarmness, and the most chilling indifference, seem rather to be the characteristics of the age, he thinks the strongest antidotes ought to be used against the spreading of this dangerous poison, and every exertion applied to rouse the stagnant principles of religion against this fatal apathy.

Yet, however great the attention which was paid to form Miss Talbot's mind to religion, it was not such as to exclude the sciences, or those languages which are generally a part of female education. She learnt astronomy and geography, and probably understood them both well, as she seems

seems to have taken much pleasure in them. She was a mistress of French and Italian, and had some knowledge of Latin; and late in life she taught herself German, with a view at first of merely reading the "Death of Abel" in the original.

An education such as this, which was at that time so uncommon, added to great natural talents and much sweetness of temper, set off by her descent from the ancient and noble family of which her father was a branch, and brought into view by her residence in the house of an eminent and rising prelate, soon made her known and much talked of in the world. Hence, even in Kent, when she was not more than twenty years of age, she was spoken of by the appellation of "the celebrated Miss Talbot;" and it was the fame of her virtues and of her superior understanding that made Mrs. Carter so earnestly desirous of being introduced to her. Their acquaintance soon ripened into friendship, and produced the Correspondence which forms the principal part of these volumes. From that time the Letters themselves will give a sufficient account of her, as they are continued to her death; and some are inserted here, and in Mrs. Carter's Memoirs, which give the particulars of that lamented and affecting event. In the Memoirs also are detailed the circumstances which induced Mrs. Carter to publish the little volume of her friend's Essays and Poems *, which has gone through several editions; together with some farther account of Mrs. Talbot, who survived her daughter many years, and died of a paralytic attack in the ninety-third year of her age.

* These were probably part of the contents of the "green-book," mentioned in the Letters.

What

What occasioned Miss Talbot to lead a single life cannot now be known: it does not appear that she had any lover after her acquaintance with Mrs. Carter commenced, when she was in her 21st year; but in one of her Letters she alludes to some prior event of that nature, which seems to have been attended with some uneasiness to her. Possibly her continual ill health might make her determine early in life not to marry; for there are passages in her Letters, which imply that she had formed such a resolution.

It may, however, add to the interest which it is to be hoped the reader will take in so excellent a character, to be informed, that as her celibacy was certainly not owing to any want of the most engaging accomplishments, so neither was it caused by any deficiency of personal attractions. There is reason on the contrary to believe that her person was at least very agreeable, and that in her youth she had been the object of much admiration.

The Editor is in possession of some lines on this subject which he will subjoin, as he presumes they have not been published before. They are in Mrs. Carter's hand-writing, but none of them could have been composed by her, as they were written before their acquaintance commenced, unless the two stanzas were her's which follow the first verses; and that is not improbable, as they are written in different colored ink, and are not unlike Mrs. Carter's style.

ON MISS TALBOT'S CONVERSING WITH A LAWYER AT BATH.

From weight of sordid venal cares
The weary pleader flies,
From Inns of court to balls repairs,
To fall by radiant eyes.

Wheree'er he goes a *Talbot's* found
In brightest lustre plac'd,
For wisdom on the bench renown'd *,
And here with beauty grac'd.

Nor boasts she only shape and air,
The arts her mind adorn,
The charms of this accomplished fair
A single triumph scorn.

Pleader, behold thy laws are vain
In liberty's defence,
For none can fly the double chain
Of beauty and of sense.

* Her Uncle, Lord Talbot, then Lord Chancellor.

OCCASIONED BY THE FOREGOING.

N. B. PERHAPS WRITTEN BY MRS. CARTER.

Vain all the Muse's boasted art
To paint a Talbot's angel form;
The bright original transcends
The force of ev'ry fancied charm.

Vain all attempts to shew her mind,
Description makes the wonder less;
The ever varying beauties there,
Her own soft language must express.

ON THE BISHOP OF BRISTOL'S * ADVISING MISS TALBOT NOT TO MIND WHAT THE MEN SAID TO HER.

Why will you strive to make the fair
So blind to ev'ry charm,
Alone unknowing of their pow'r
Which ev'ry bosom warm?

* This circumstance marks the date when these lines were written; for Dr. Secker was made Bishop of Bristol in Dec. 1734, and translated from thence to Oxford in May 1737; so that Miss Talbot could not have been at that time under thirteen years of age, nor more than sixteen.

No,

No, Secker, no, in reason's spight
Thy arts must not prevail;
Here overcome, and only here,
Thy eloquence must fail.

Of Mrs. Vesey, the Lady to whom the remaining Letters in the third and fourth volumes are addressed, little need be said. She was so well known in the world, and so many of her friends are still living, as to render it superfluous to enter into any detail of her life. She was second daughter to Sir Thomas Vesey, Bart. Archbishop of Tuam; and was married, first to William Handcock, Esq. and secondly to Agmondesham Vesey, of Lucan near Dublin, Esq. for many years a member of the Irish House of Commons, and Comptroller and Accountant General for Ireland. She left no children by either of her husbands, both of whom she survived. Mr. Vesey was a near relation of her father; but though they lived together at least in a very friendly manner, he did not leave her in such easy circumstances, as her time of life, and her rank in society required, and his own fortune allowed. But Mr. Vesey's nephew and heir, of the same name, in a most liberal and handsome manner did what his uncle should have done, and by his assistance and that of her friend Mrs. Handcock, Mrs. Vesey was enabled to spend the short remainder of her days, among her friends, in her house in Clarges Street.

The manner in which Mrs. Vesey passed her time in London, is more known than that of almost any person of equal

equal rank, from the appellation which the company that assembled at her house acquired of the *Bas bleu.* Some of the most eminent persons who met there have been characterized, and the origin of the term itself explained by the elegant pen of Mrs. Hannah More, in her beautiful little poem called " The Bas bleu." Sir William Forbes also in his life of Dr. Beattie, and the Editor in his Memoirs of Mrs. Carter, have given some account of the plan of this society, (if it may be called a plan) though they think rather differently as to the circumstance which gave it its general denomination.

Mrs. Vesey was a very good and amiable woman, with an excellent understanding, and a considerable share of knowledge. Her imagination was peculiarly vivid and brilliant; and so completely lightened from the weight of matter seemed her ideas, and so ætherial her sentiments, that Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Carter (and perhaps also her other intimate friends) generally spoke of her under the appellation of *the Sylph.* It will be seen by Mrs. Carter's Letters to her, that she had unhappily imbibed some doubts concerning revealed religion; but as, like her friend Lord Lyttelton's, they arose from no vanity, or self-conceit: as she proposed them with a mind open to conviction, and ready to embrace the truth as soon as it was perceived, there is sufficient reason to believe that the proofs of it when placed in their proper light, produced the same effect upon her understanding, as they had done upon that of the distinguished nobleman above-mentioned. Indeed this seems a fact which can hardly admit a doubt, when the Letter to Mrs. Carter, (prefixed to her Letters in the third volume,) which was not delivered

delivered till after her death, is considered. In that she attributes her hope of future bliss to the light which Mrs. Carter had thrown upon that sublime and awful subject—Happy! who found so wise, so pious, so kind a friend, to resolve such important doubts—and thrice happy that friend to whom was allotted the noble and even divine office of turning a fellow creature from error, and perhaps of *saving a soul from death.*

It will be seen in the Letters, that Mrs. Vesey had always a dread on her mind of outliving her faculties; and this melancholy event actually took place. It was alleviated to her by the care of Mrs. Handcock, a relation of her first husband who always resided with her, and by the constant attention of some of her friends, of whom Mrs. Carter was one. She never omitted visiting her every day while she was in town, though the unfortunate lady shewed no consciousness of her presence, nor ever afterwards regained any portion of understanding. From this sad state she was relieved by the friendly hand of death, unless the Editor is misinformed, in the year 1791, after having remained in it for about, or near, two years. For after the powers of her mind began to fail, her fancy was still alive for some months to those inanimate objects which had used to give her delight, even when she had ceased to notice her friends. She was about seventy-five years of age at the time of her decease.

There is another person who seems from their Correspondence to have attracted a considerable share of Miss Talbot's and Mrs. Carter's attention; but whose history appears

pears so mysterious as well as interesting, that the editor thinks it necessary to give some farther account of him. His name was Joseph Emin, an Armenian Christian, but born in Persia in the year 1726. In 1751 he worked his passage from Calcutta, where his father was a merchant, to London, in the Walpole East Indiaman. He arrived there without either friends or money, and was for some years a servant, a labourer, and a porter; but omitted no opportunity of acquiring knowledge. An accident introduced him first to Mr. Burke, and then to the late Duke of Northumberland who enquired into his history and views, and became his patron. By his Grace he was recommended to William Duke of Cumberland, by whom he was first sent to Woolwich for the purpose of a military education at his expence, and with whom he afterwards served as a volunteer in the campaign of 1757. He then in the following year accompanied the Duke of Marlborough in the same capacity in the attack on St. Malo; and distinguished himself in both services. In the year after he joined the King of Prussia's army for a short time, and then Prince Ferdinand's, but had no opportunity of seeing service in either.

By this time, however, Emin had gained what he so much wished, a considerable knowledge of the European art of war; and he was enabled to put in execution the plan for which alone he appears to have wished to come to England. This was the attempt to deliver his country, Armenia, from the Turkish yoke. For this purpose he went to Aleppo, and from thence penetrated into Armenia, where the intent of his coming was soon discovered; but

finding himself in want of money, he returned once more to England. Here he was again assisted by the Duke of Northumberland, Mrs. Montagu, Miss Talbot, and several other persons of rank and fashion, both with money and letters, and departed from England for the last time in Oct. 1761. He now went through Russia into Georgia, then governed by Prince Heraclius, whom he endeavoured to persuade to assist him in his arduous undertaking. But Heraclius was not only jealous of him, but was in reality hardly able to maintain himself in the possession of his own dominions; and Emin, after having been first his favourite, and then imprisoned by him, was at length ordered to quit Georgia.

In these half civilized countries which are surrounded by the great and rival empires of Russia, Turkey, and Persia, Emin remained with various success, but with a character always unblemished, for about eight years; and then losing all hopes for the present of freeing his unhappy country, he went through Persia to Calcutta, where his father was living. Here Mr. Cartier, then Governor General, gave him an ensign's commission, and he served several campaigns in India.

After this, having no prospect of advancement in India, he returned into Persia in hopes of making another struggle in Armenia, but finding those expectations baffled by the envy or hatred of the Patriarch of Armenia, he married and settled at Ispahan during the reign of Carim Khan, and the succeeding usurpation of Aly Murad. After living there for some years, the troubles of that unhappy country seem to have determined him to go back to Calcutta, which he

he reached just before Mr. Hastings returned to England. On Lord Cornwallis's arrival in India, he allowed Emin, who was then upwards of 60 years of age, to remain at Calcutta with the rank, pay, batta, and house-rent of an ensign. This was through the interest of Col. Pearse, who had known him in the academy at Woolwich.

It may, perhaps, be thought that the editor has been too prolix in this account of a character so little known. Should this be case, he can only apologize for it by saying that he was so much interested by the manner in which Miss Talbot mentions him, that he took no small pains to gain some knowledge of his history. For this purpose he took the liberty of applying to his Grace the Duke of Northumberland, who, with his usual condescension, had the goodness to communicate all that he remembered to have heard concerning him from his father the late Duke. His Grace indeed supposes him to have been the son of the celebrated Shah Thomas, more generally known by the name of Kouli Khan; but this could not have been the case, if Emin's own narrative be true. For this narrative, printed in London in one octavo volume, in 1792, the editor is obliged to Mr. Montagu of Portman Square, to whom also he had applied for information. It is probably very little known. The style of it is harsh and dry, half oriental and half English, very obscure and unsatisfactory, but bearing evident marks of truth and genuineness. The author affects to throw a veil of mystery over his ancestry, but it is easy to discover that he thinks himself, or wishes to be thought, a descendant from the former sovereigns of Armenia.

His character bears a strong resemblance to the ancient Christian knights of romance. Virtuous, pious, and enthusiastic; to raise the cross, and depress the crescent, seems to have been his chief aim. Active, brave, and hardy: he formed a good and noble purpose, and pursued it with unremitted ardour. A lascar sailor, a London porter, a volunteer on the continent of Europe, or a welcome guest at the greatest tables in England, he never lost sight of his first design. To that, every acquirement of art and fortune, every gift of nature, was subservient; and his hopes still remained, till, chilled by age and overcome by disappointment, he resigned them into the hand of Providence, and patiently submitted to his will. He was still living a pensioner upon the Bengal establishment in November 1807 *.

THIS preface has been drawn into much greater length than the editor intended: he will only add, therefore, that

* After the first edition of these Letters was published, the editor met with an interesting account of Emin in Lord Teignmouth's Life of Sir William Jones. His Lordship considers his character and adventures in exactly the same point of view in which they have been mentioned, and adds that, "Sir William Jones condescended to revise his (Emin's) account of his eventful life, so far only as to correct orthographical errors, but without any amendment of the style." Sir William himself says of him, in a Letter to Sir J. Macpherson from Bengal, May 6, 1786, "I have already thanked you for your kind attentions to Emin, and I beg to repeat them. Many in England will be equally thankful. He is a fine fellow; and if active service should be required, he would seek nothing so much, as to be placed in the most perilous edge of the battle."

See Life of Sir William Jones, 4to. edition, P. 277. to 280.

as the reasons which he has assigned in it for this publication are satisfactory to his own conscience, he indulges also the hope that they will appear in the same light to the world. Should he be mistaken in this, he has at least the consolation of thinking that these Letters can do no harm. No family will be made uneasy by their contents; no antiquated scandal will here be found revived; no frailties of the last generation "drawn from their dread abode." But if the purest morality recommended on the best principles; if the vital spirit of Christian piety, breathed in language always persuasive, and often elegant, can engage the public attention; then may it be hoped, unless the Editor's partiality misleads him, that these Letters will not have been written in vain. They will at any rate serve as an additional proof of a truth, of which happily there are many living examples, that cheerfulness and gaiety are not inconsistent with the strictest virtue, nor the most exemplary piety, with the manners and society of high life.

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A

SERIES OF LETTERS

BETWEEN

MRS. CARTER AND MISS TALBOT.

SERIES OF LETTERS

BETWEEN

MRS. ELIZABETH CARTER

AND

MISS CATHERINE TALBOT.

MR. WRIGHT* TO MRS. CARTER.

Jan. 14, 1741.

DEAR MADAM,

MISS TALBOT is as desirous of seeing you, and as impatient as you can possibly be of seeing her; but when I shall be able to procure your interview, the Lord knows! for Miss Harvey is

* Thomas Wright was an astronomer and antiquary, well known at that time. In his former capacity he published the "Physical and Mathematical Elements of Astronomy," and afterwards in 1750, a "Theory of the Universe," in quarto; a wild, fanciful, but ingenious performance. In 1748, he published, also in quarto, "Louthiana," views and descrip-

 tions

is almost dying for a sight of her, i. e. in company, but could never yet attain it. I have given your service to her, and she begs her's may be returned. I shall hope to see you soon. Next week I shall be settled in my lodgings, and shall have something to entertain you with, &c. &c. &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Mr. WRIGHT.

Jan. 28, 1741.

SIR,

I do not know whether you ought to congratulate me upon my good success last Sunday, for what have I gained by it? only a new addition to my impatience, which really was very strong before, but is now out of all bounds of moderation. Miss Talbot is absolutely my passion; I think of her all day, dream of her all night, and one way or other introduce her into every subject

tions of the principal antiquities in the county of Louth in Ireland. He had long been a friend both of Miss Talbot and Mrs. Carter, and anxiously desired that they should be known to each other. These Letters therefore are printed as introductory to their Correspondence.

I talk of. You say she has a quarrel against my fan sticks; give me the pleasure, if you can, of knowing she had no objection to the paper. You will see her to-morrow (a happiness I envy you much more than all your possessions in the skies.) Pray make her a thousand compliments and apologies for my haunting her in the manner I have done, and still intend to do, though I am afraid she will think me as troublesome as an evil genius, a species of beings she never could be acquainted with before.

Is there no possibility of my conversing with Miss Talbot except in dumb show through my fan sticks? Is she absolutely inaccessible? I cannot long support this playing Pyramus and Thisbe. Must I never hope for a nearer view till I meet her glittering among the stars in a future state of being?

I could dwell on this subject for ever, but must descend from the stars and Miss Talbot, wretch as you are, to you, and in the language of mere mortals acquaint you that I left my name at your door this evening. If your conjurorship's worship is not engaged to-morrow in the afternoon, Mrs. Rooke* bids me tell you, she desires your com-

* The Hon. Mrs. Rooke was sister to John first Viscount Dudley and Ward, and widow of George Rooke, Esq. son to Admiral Sir George Rooke. It was at her house, St. Laurence, near Canterbury, that Miss Talbot and Mrs. Carter first met.

pany to hold a consultation upon the screen, and hopes you will bring half the stars in the firmament along with you to fix upon it, not forgetting the sun, moon, and other planets. As this affair is of the utmost consequence, Mrs. Rooke would not trust it to the *Special-General* post, but has sent an express to take your answer.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *August* 16, 1741.

MADAM,

As I heard Mr. Wright mention his design of writing to you, I could not resist the temptation of taking that opportunity to torment you with a melancholy proof how much you are the subject of my thoughts.

I am afraid this Letter has begun under the influence of some very dull planet, for it has cost me at least half an hour's laborious study to compose the Introduction. I believe too one cause of the difficulty may be, that I have almost forgot my alphabet, and if I keep sinking on from one abyss of ignorance to another, with a velocity proportionable to what I have lately done, I must soon turn back

back again to the first foundation of all human learning, a horn-book.

I believe you will the sooner pardon the present trouble I give you, when you know that if I do not satisfy my present inclination in writing, it is very probable I may haunt you, for I have drawn Mr. Wright into the scheme of a romantic voyage to the Goodwin sands, where it is one to a hundred I may be drowned, and you will readily compound for the impertinence of a Letter, rather than run the hazard of being surprized by a posthumous visit. However, if this should happen to be the case, I promise to accost you in the most agreeable manner possible, in the dress and attitude of Mrs. Rowe's etherial beings, or, (what would make me appear to still greater advantage) like one of your own beautiful ideas put into form.

I could sooth my imagination into the most pleasing dream possible with this delusion, and after all I am not sure whether the whole expedition may prove any thing else, for a lady who has tried all arguments in vain to divert me from the undertaking, has I am afraid practised her wicked arts with better success upon the philosopher, for I think he seems a little staggered; and though to comfort him under the apprehensions of sinking, I have given the most poetical description of sub-

marine

marine palaces, coral groves, and the conversation of sea nymphs, he seems to retain a very prominent affection for terra firma. We have all made our epitaphs, which are really very curious pieces, and will tend much to the edification of the public. In all elements, and in all states, I am, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Sept.* 15, 1741.

If it cost even Miss Carter herself half an hour's study to frame the Introduction to one who she might be sure would receive any thing of her writing with a great deal of pleasure, I will give her leave to imagine that I have been racking my brains for an answer ever since I received it, and then I need make no further excuse for not acknowledging the favor sooner. This really ought to have been the case, and would sound much better than to tell you that I have been engaged at a horse race, or in working a short apron; employments so idle that I am afraid if your expedition to the Goodwin sands had led you to those coral groves you talk of, you would scarce have thought the

the person who could be pleased with them, worthy your leaving the sea nymphs to come and pay her a visit.

I am sorry to hear you are forgetting your alphabet, and it was something cruel to accompany this bad news with a proof what agreeable use you could make of it, that I might know how to regret it the more. It is certain however, that as you have already made more and better use of it, than most people do in a whole lifetime, you have acquired the privilege to lay it aside whenever you please. Do not think though that this way of reasoning will hold in every thing; the pleasure your acquaintance gave me last winter, was more than my utmost vanity could expect, but this is so far from satisfying me, that I am only more desirous of having it repeated this year, and begin to wish that Kent may not afford you even your favourite amusement of push pin, but force you from mere dullness to return to London, where indeed I greatly want your interest to make up a quarrel which a whole Summer's idleness will give Mr. Wright too great handle for. To my shame be it spoken, his Letter too is still unanswered, and may probably remain so a good while longer, which in this case I must own to be the height of ingratitude, since it is that poor unanswered Letter of his, which procured me the pleasure of hearing from you, and the opportunity

I so gladly lay hold of subscribing myself, dear Miss Carter, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Nov.* 5, 1741.

Instead of making any apology, Madam, for not sooner acknowledging the favor of your Letter, I may with great justice boast of that omission, as a real merit, and a singular instance of mortification and self-denial, but I do not design to enter into a panegyric of my own fortitude, as I think that rather incumbent upon you, as it has so long reprieved you from the trouble of a very insignificant Epistle.

Your wishes have succeeded but too well, for a constant run of success has made me take an utter distaste to push pin. I need not tell you after this, that I have one after another quarrelled with all my playthings. My ball and battledores are quite thrown aside, and even my favourite toy a pen has so long lain undisturbed, that it now becomes a novelty to me; and may perhaps divert me for a week, which I dare say you are very sorry to hear, and heartily petition the stars that I may not employ

ploy it all that time in tormenting you. But really, Madam, however agreeable this might be to my own inhuman inclinations, you would be under no dread could you guess how extremely I must be puzzled for a subject in these regions of obscurity and uninterrupted dullness; a place where nothing remarkable ever happened since the landing of Julius Cæsar, and all that passes ten miles distant, is as absolutely unknown as if it fell out in the country of Prester John; and to sum up all in one word, a place where the name of Miss Talbot is a stranger, and her character would be looked upon as a fiction. On voit par là, Mademoiselle que la Renommée (même la votre) a ses bornes, et qu'il y a au monde des cœurs et des esprits qui ne reconnoissent pas votre pouvoir. People here are not in the least danger of losing their wits about you, but proceed as quietly and as regularly in their affairs as if there was no such person in being. Nobody has been observed to lose their way, run against a door, or sit silent and staring in a room full of company in thinking upon you, except my solitary self, who (as you may perceive in the description) have the advantage of looking half mad when I do not see you, and (as you know by many ocular proofs) extremely silly when I do.

It was quite unnecessary for you to make an apology for your employments, to a person who cannot

not boast of any thing half so useful; however I cannot help thinking myself mistress of some resolution in observing the advice of my physician, and riding out between four and five every morning, and thus I have very idly passed the whole summer in the care of my health, and the utter neglect of my intellects. The season now confines my exercise to a solitary moonlight walk along the sea shore, which is at present a favourite entertainment with me, as it helps to indulge the melancholy turn of my thoughts by a view of that element which has separated me for ever, from a brother extremely dear to me*.

I believe you will have no objection to my returning as soon as possible to these silent amusements; but will be very rejoiced to find that I am going to subscribe myself, dear Miss Talbot, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Jan. 7th, 1742.

As of all things in the world I hate ingratitude, I do not know how to part with the old

* A brother who died upon foreign service, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

year,

year, without making my acknowledgements to it for introducing me to Miss Carter's acquaintance, and think it no ill contrivance by addressing these thanks to her to engage her good-nature to continue to me a pleasure I am so sensible of.

I have not the gift of saying fine things, therefore shall not pretend to answer all those with which your politeness would flatter me, or perhaps by an agreeable irony would rally my vanity. The most I pretend to is common sense enough not to be deceived by them into a false notion of myself, and charity enough to believe you meant them kindly, in token of which charity I sent you many compliments by Mr. Wright, but if I had not been impertinent enough to make him open his Letter again, I believe you would never have had them. I had the pleasure of spending part of November and December in the same family with him, and often enquired about the time he passed in Kent, which he talked of as one that was equal to all I could imagine of it. Poor man, the time he spent at Windsor was the latter part of it embittered by a loss which he seemed touched by very deeply, and his melancholy air made me reflect on your moonlight walks. To you, however, who can look beyond the stars for a support under every affliction, too much indulgence of these sad and soothing meditations should not be allowed, and I should rather

rather recommend all sorts of idleness to you. As this town is the properest place in the world to follow such a prescription in, I shall be a little impatient to hear of your arrival in it. I am afraid this is being very ill-natured to a family I have a great respect for, but except that article of your spending a whole Winter in the country, I very sincerely wish both them and you all the happiness the new year can bring with it, and hope the other too interested wish may be excused.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Jan.* 25, 1742.

If you, Madam, could think it necessary to make any acknowledgment to the past year for a trifle hardly deserving your remembrance till the present, how much higher ought my gratitude to rise, who am indebted to it for a pleasure which will constantly supply me with the most agreeable reflections I am capable of, while I have either sense or memory left.

Benedetto sia il giorno, e'l mese, e'l anno
E la stagione, e'l tempo, e'l hora, e'l punto.

And

And St. James's church, and Mr. Wright, and the particles *yes* and *no*, and every other circumstance, and every other person that contributed to make me happy in the sight and conversation of Miss Talbot. If I had Petrarch's genius I would not have borrowed his Italian on this anniversary of January 25th, 1741. I have the greater reason for the pleasure I find in the return of a day that introduced me to your acquaintance, as that was attended with a circumstance I have not often found in the attainment of any other wish, that it was equal, not to say superior, to the most flattering expectations I had formed of it, and ———

How can you be so cruel as to cramp my genius for saying what you call *fine things?* A term I must absolutely quarrel with you, unless you understand by it the real and unaffected expressions of my thoughts, and to these you may apply whatever name you like best. If your Letter had not laid me under some sort of restriction, I should certainly have displayed my eloquence for this half hour in talking of you, which would in some measure alleviate the mortification I feel in not being able to talk with you.

Nothing could more obligingly flatter my vanity than your enquiries about my coming to London, but I must follow your prescription in another place, for I am going in a few days to Dr. Lynch's at Canterbury,

terbury, where I shall have all the opportunities in the world for it, as I generally lead a very agreeable idle sort of a life when I am there. But as much pleasure as I always find in a place and a set of company I am very fond of, the indolence of my temper meets no small difficulty in the thoughts of getting there, and a journey of only sixteen miles seems to me as formidable as if it was a voyage to Grand Cairo.

I find myself growing extremely stupid, so think it the most prudent method to conclude, when I have assured you, that if my wishes have any efficacy, you will not want for any happiness either this or any other of the years that compose the longest life can possibly afford; and one of the most agreeable wishes I can form for myself is, that I may still have the pleasure of subscribing myself, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Piccadilly, *June* 1, 1742.

In a time when my health and spirits were too weak to receive much pleasure from any thing, I received a most obliging Letter from dear Miss Carter, that really gave me a great deal; but unequal

unequal as I am at the very best to such a Correspondence, imagine how unfit I am to renew it after a long illness that has exhausted all the little vivacity I ever had, and left me a mere trifler of the dullest kind. So slight a thing is gratitude in the present age, that these considerations were quite sufficient to hinder me from acknowledging the favour of your last Letter, till self-interest comes in the way, and puts me in mind that unless I desire you will direct your next to Cuddesden, I may miss the pleasure of receiving it. It is now little more than a week we have to stay in this unjoyous town: a place surely of as much gaiety, and as little cheerfulness as one can imagine. Its neighbourhood is enriched since you was here, with a building which I am told exceeds in taste and magnificence every one in Europe: to untravelled eyes like mine 'tis to be sure an amazing fine thing, and quite worth your coming to see it next year, by which time they may possibly have found all that it wants to make it complete; some use for it answerable to the fineness and stateliness of the structure, for to be sure it is quite vexatious at present to see all the pomp and splendour of a Roman amphitheatre, devoted to no better use than a twelvepenny entertainment of cold ham and chicken*.

* Probably Ranelagh is the place meant, which was finished in 1740.

Certainly

Certainly this multiplying of amusements, calculated by an appearance of cheapness to draw the lower kind of people into a frequent expence, and a constant dissipation of mind, must in the end prove of ruinous consequences. After all there is no fear that people will not take care to divert themselves quite enough, and, as Mr. Locke says of children, be more pleased and in better humour when they are left to invent their own diversions, than they can be with the richest playthings that are provided for them at an extravagant expence.

I want much to know whether you have yet condescended to read Joseph Andrews, as I am well assured the character of Mr. Adams is drawn from one in real life: if the book strikes you as it did me, you will certainly come up to town next winter, that you and I may join in contriving some means of getting acquainted with him. I have known you throw away your contrivance upon people not half as well worth it; but I will heartily join in all Petrarch's benedictions of the year, the day, the place of error and partiality themselves, since it is to them I owe every opportunity of subscribing myself, &c.

MRS. CARTER TO MISS TALBOT.

Deal, *Aug.* 4, 1742.

I OWE you a thousand thanks, my dear Miss Talbot, for a Letter that gave me inexpressible pleasure by a confirmation of your perfect recovery. I had some time before the happiness of hearing you was out of danger, but I really stood in need of a testimony under your own hand, after I had so fully prepossessed myself with a notion that you could not be designed to continue long in a world which affords so little capable of entertaining a mind like your's. I had considered you as a stella nova, who was only to pay a transient visit just to raise our admiration and delight, and then to vanish to be the ornament of some happier system, and shine in more unclouded skies; but these I now hope were only the melancholy apprehensions with which people are so apt to terrify their imaginations on every appearance of danger in which they feel themselves strongly concerned, and my fears are at present tolerably well dissipated by your recovery.

I do not know whether I should compliment you on an occasion which must give so much joy to a great part of the world besides, as its probable

you might be extremely willing to resign that superior figure you make among mortals for a more equal rank in a society of angels; but you must give me leave to congratulate all who have the happiness to know you, among whom none can feel a more sincere and affecting delight than myself, or wish with a greater earnestness that Providence may extend to the greatest possible length a life so truly valuable.

Nothing could be a more seasonable revival to my spirits than your Letter, for at the time I received it, I was sadly depressed at parting from Miss ———, with whom I had spent four or five delightful months at ———, a place I never yet could quit with any tolerable degree of resignation. It will be perfect charity in you, my dear Miss Talbot, to furnish me with some salutary philosophical remedies in this exigence, for my own little stock is quite exhausted. Peut être qu'il n'y a pas d'autre moyen de se tranquilliser qu'en se contentant d'une bienveillance generale, et degagant le cœur autant qu'il se peut des attachemens particuliers. C'est ce qui oteroit infailliblement la moitié des douleurs de la vie; mais le malheur est qu'en même tems on se priveroit de ses plus vifs et plus doux plaisirs, et j'aimerois mieux être quelquesfois assez miserable que de me trouver avec cette fade et ennuyeuse indifference que Messieurs les Stoiciens,

appellent egalité d'ame. I believe you will laugh at this strange medley, but I have for some time so used myself to it in conversation that it is become quite natural to me, and out of the two languages I have formed a third, which I am afraid you will find to be no language at all.

While I was at Canterbury I had often the pleasure of talking of you with the Dean*, who never mentions you but with the justest admiration: it gives me great delight to converse with any one who has seen you, and next to this, with those who wish to see you if they could; which is the case with two young ladies who envy me an advantage they have endeavoured after in vain, and their disappointment is so much the greater, as they are persons whose fine accomplishments would give them the quickest sense of such a happiness as they pursued. It is impossible you should know one half of the schemes with which people puzzle their inventions about you, and this plot in particular I believe you have never discovered; as our projects have been attended with a very different success, I willingly resign to these ladies the honor of having been beforehand with me in the attempt.

I have not yet seen Joseph Andrews, but shall be very impatient till I do, as I am so strongly pre-

* Dr. Lynch.

judiced in favor of it by your recommendation; I intend to look over the two last volumes of Pamela, which I have yet had no sort of inclination to, but I am just told there are some pretty criticisms on the Distressed Mother, a play which notwithstanding its general applause, I never could bring myself to like, but I have some curiosity to see what so accurate a judge as *Pamela* can say about it. As many objections however as I have to this tragedy in itself, I was extremely delighted last winter at Canterbury, by seeing Hermione and Orestes played by a very young gentleman and lady with a greater force and propriety of fiction than I ever saw on any stage, and it would really have been surprizing in people who make it their profession.

I have just bethought myself that this is the most unmerciful Letter that ever was written, and that I can never with any tolerable modesty hope for the happiness of hearing from you again, unless I check my inhuman inclination of filling my paper by subscribing myself, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Oct.* 20, 1742.

There was something so obliging, my dear Miss Carter, in the length of your Letter, that nothing but your making an excuse for it could have spoiled it. You may perhaps think my long silence as obliging on the other hand, and therefore being warned by your example I will make no excuse for it at all. It is true, that reading over your Letter again had like to have frightened me from answering it even now, for as it is impossible I should deserve half the fine things you say, the more you know of me, the sooner you will be undeceived: not that I disclaim any part of the commendation that belongs to honesty of heart, to gratitude, and to any mere common sense, good qualities that you are pleased to attribute to me, mais pour les astres, ma chêre demoiselle, pour la philosophie, ou pour le bel esprit vous savez je crois aussi bien que moi que je n'y ai nulle pretension. Ce monde que vous meprisez tant a bien d'attachemens pour moi, et ce n'est pas a *Messieurs les Stoïciens* que je m'adresserai pour me tranquilliser quand je suis inquietée par les frivoles chagrins, comme assurément je le suis fort souvent. Pour l'amitié il n'y a point de

cœur

cœur qui en scait mieux le prix inestimable que le mien qui est particulierement heureux sur cet article là.

This puts me in mind of mentioning a book I am now deeply interested and engaged in, and which has pleased me most particularly, from the peculiarly agreeable light which friendship throws on many passages of it. To be sure you cannot be unacquainted with Lord Clarendon's admirable History of the Rebellion; if you are, you have some weeks very high entertainment to come, and which is much heightened by reading it in company. Whatever amusements riding, painting, and my own little shelf of books may afford to diversify the morning, I always wait for the evening with impatience, and then as entirely forget all relation to the modern world as if I had really lived a century ago. You will think I have my heart much set upon politics this year, when I tell you I have been studying Machiavel too: besides his writing such excellent Italian, there is a strength and spirit of good sense in his reflections upon Livy particularly, that I cannot help being pleased with, and therefore I am willing to persuade myself that he is branded with more infamy than he deserves; and I think I could find pretty strong passages to prove that he was far from meaning to recommend the villanies, which perhaps however it was too dangerous even

to

to mention. Dangerous indeed in such a mixture as mankind, where every passion is allowed to misinterpret things in its own way.

We shall stay here till almost Christmas, by that time perhaps I may not much dislike the thoughts of London, I am sure I shall like them much the better if I have any likelikood of seeing you there, being with more sincerity than your compliments deserve,

Your's, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Jan.* 1, 1743.

I CANNOT begin the new year in a more agreeable manner than by wishing it may convey every possible happiness to dear Miss Talbot, I cannot help mentioning one instance as it is so particularly affecting to myself: that you may very often feel a pleasure equal to what I receive from your Letters.

I must thank you for the perfectly agreeable entainment I have met in reading Joseph Andrews, as it was your recommendation that first tempted me to enquire after it. It contains such a surprizing

prizing variety of nature, wit, morality, and good sense, as is scarcely to be met with in any one composition, and there is such a spirit of benevolence runs through the whole, as I think renders it peculiarly charming. The author has touched some particular instances of inhumanity which can only be hit in this kind of writing, and I do not remember to have seen observed any where else; these certainly cannot be represented in too detestable a light, as they are so severely felt by the persons they affect, and looked upon in too careless a manner by the rest of the world.

It must surely be a marvellous wrongheadedness and perplexity of understanding that can make any one consider this complete satire as a very immoral thing, and of the most dangerous tendency, and yet I have met with some people who treat it in the most outrageous manner. Excepting Joseph Andrews and Ariosto, I have not read any thing time immemorial, as I have been greatly engaged in the important affair of working a pair of ruffles and handkerchief, to which I have attached myself more than would do me good, if luckily another species of trifling did not prevent the ill effects of this, and to the great surprize of all my acquaintance I did not take it into my head to grow very fond of dancing. It seems to be looked upon as a very odd thing that a person who thought of little

but

but books at fifteen, should at five and twenty run mad after balls and assemblies. However I am too inconstant in my follies to apprehend being long under the power of any one; the present 'tis probable will be of no very long duration, but soon give place to something new, and perhaps the next account of me may be that I am learning the Chinese language, or studying Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, though I am apt to believe that will be one of the last kinds of profound trifling I am like to run into.

I ought to beg your pardon for all this egotism, but after the description I have given you of my employments, you will easily imagine I am at a loss for a subject: there is one indeed for which I would gladly quit my own dear self, and in all changes of temper could dwell upon with the utmost pleasure, but this you have been cruel enough to restrain me from mentioning to you.

I should be extremely obliged to you if you would let me know if there be any collection of Italian Letters, for I do not remember ever to have heard of any. I have some inclination to attempt at writing this language, which would be a difficult task without some such assistance, as I never learnt to speak it. I hope you will excuse this liberty, and believe me, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *Feb.* 28, 1743.

To prove to you that I have not been asleep, dear Miss Carter, ever since you favored me with a very agreeable Letter, which I own is a supposition you might naturally enough have made from my long silence; I will begin by answering a question you asked me about Italian Letters. I have enquired, when it fell in my way, of people who knew more books in that charming language than my very slight reading in it has made me acquainted with: I find there are many volumes of that kind of composition, but very few amongst them likely to please so good a taste as your's. The chief I have heard named are Bentivoglio's and and Bembo's, which are mostly engrossed by politics and ceremonies, and others by Tasso (not Torquato, I believe,) and Annibal Caro, which they tell me are full of concettos and false wit. By this time it is more than probable however, that having formed the intention so long ago, you have not only read but exceeded the best of them, which indeed is no great compliment, after having given so bad a character of them all.

I would

I would be still more satirical upon the workers of muslin and lawn, if I imagined you would pursue your industry that way so far as to hurt your eyes, which would be an unpardonable sacrifice in any body capable of employing them so much better: in any more moderate degree I highly applaud every such laudable imitation of the quiet domestic virtues of our great grandmothers. I agree with you entirely about your newly acquired love of dancing. I cannot imagine what business I had to grow fond of an amusement that scarce happens in my way twice in a year. Perhaps you may rather expect some account of our London entertainments, than sage remarks on those which I envy you in the country, but I have really been out very little this winter, and have not yet seen Garrick one single time, or suffered the ennuï of a four hours oratorio; the only play I have been at, was to see Mrs. Porter take leave of the stage, which she did with a very good grace in an epilogue that seemed dictated by good sense, and spoke with a sincerely grateful heart.

I do not know whether Mr. Wright, amidst all his late negociations, has had any leisure to give you an account of them; but I believe that he is not a little glad that her Czarian Majesty has made him such moderate offers only for coming to trace out triangles and circles amidst the snows of Russia,

as he may with a safe conscience, and with great prudence refuse: he has accordingly refused them, and I hope he will never have reason to repent it.

I must not conclude this Letter without adding mama's humble service to you, and by that time I imagine you will be quite ready for the present to dismiss, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *April* 16, 1743.

I am extremely obliged to you, my dear Miss Talbot, for your account of the Italian epistolists. I find I am not likely to be much edified by their sense, but they may perhaps be of use to me in gaining the improvement I wish for in the language.

I heartily forgive your raillery on my employment, which I have with great sagacity at last discovered to be a very fruitless expence of time: this sort of work indeed would be no unpardonable amusement, was it any ingenious imitation of nature, but really most of the patterns are a perfect imitation of the gothic taste, and a mere combination of inconsistencies. Thus having spent several weeks

weeks about a thing that has had no tendency to make me better, wiser, or more agreeable to myself or to society, and finding no great joy from that reputation it has gained me with notable folks, I shall for the future bid farewell to this sort of fame, and quietly proceed in the regular track and unambitious exercise of harmless plain-work; as tending much more to the emolument of my family, though (notwithstanding all the fine things I have been saying) not so well suited to my excursive genius, which is better pleased in wandering through the perplexities of a scrawling pattern, than in being confined to travel over an unwearied seam a mile long, from which I believe you will think I have taken the plan of this period.

I long much to know how you like the "Complaint." I have heard it spoken of in such a manner by good judges, that perhaps it would be prudent in me to avoid declaring how much I admire it; some defects it certainly has: but surely these may be treated with indulgence, when they are compensated by such surprizing beauty.

Mr. Wright had given me no account of his negociations when I received your's: I have since had one from himself, which I for some time looked over with great veneration, and most profound ignorance, imagining it had been wrote in Coptic characters; till at length I happily discovered the name

name of Miss Talbot, certain magic syllables that cast a more than lustre over the more than Egyptian darkness of a manuscript, which it would have been impossible for me to read without their assistance, and with it, I believe, I might defy any language or any scrawl, that is, or is not in use upon the face of the whole earth to puzzle me.

I hope, as you had so long avoided public places, you have since persevered, as that may have been a means to secure you from the epidemic cold, of which we hear so many melancholy accounts. I would willingly run the hazard of it if I could get to London, for the whole county of Kent is at present to me depopulated, so that with the absence of almost all my friends, and the being confined to sit listening to the roaring of the waves, and the horrible howling of a North East wind, I am quite in a melancholy situation; though it is a great advantage under such solitary circumstances to have a genius for castle building, which would afford me some happy hours if I was banished to the Orcades. I began this paper with a very unmerciful design of proceeding to the bottom, and it will be very good news to you that I am at present prevented from adding more, than that I am, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *May* 23, 1743.

Your situation, my dear Miss Carter, as you describe it, exceedingly resembles that of poor Hero; warned by her fate do not expect a Leander from the opposite coast, but rather return to London next winter, and when he is found may he be equally faithful, and more happy.

I believe it was a presentiment, that when I did write, I should write all this nonsense, which has kept me from answering your Letter all the while. I am sure it was neither a multiplicity of business or amusements, for I never passed a winter more dully, or more idly than this; and yet less was it my impatience for a reply, which nobody that corresponds with you can be so stupid as to be without. Sincerely, there is a pleasure in seeing your hand, even on the outside of a Letter, which forces me with all my awkwardness of making speeches, to tell you of it, that I may engage your good nature to continue it to me in spite of my laziness.

We are now in the midst of packing, and all that disagreeable hurry that one constantly reserves to take off from the joy that would else be unavoidable on removing from this busy town to the quiet life

life of the country, drest in all its summer charms: for some weeks we shall scarcely enjoy the calm of that quiet way of living, since we only take Oxfordshire in our way to Gloucester, where we shall probably stay to the beginning of July. A very insignificant information this, but if you will have the charity to imagine a meaning in it, it is that you may know I shall easily be found by a letter directed to me at the palace at Gloucester*.

Not that I should excuse myself for writing in the unmeaning style, since in that I should but have copied the tip top book that has come out this winter; " The History of the Family of Yvery:" I am sure you must have heard of it, and I have had the further pleasure of turning over two thick volumes which are really filled with circumstances of as little importance to any of its readers; six weeks spent at Mount Pleasant at Tunbridge, is thought sufficient to authorize a cut of the place, though by no means a fine one, and an enumeration of the various misspellings of the name of Percival, engrosses half a page to prove the antiquity of the family. Lord Chesterfield has treated this sort of family vanity very whimsically. A ver-

* Then inhabited by the amiable and exemplary prelate of whom Pope says,

" Manners with candour is to *Benson* giv'n."

tuoso of his acquaintance this winter at an auction bought a very old picture of a man and woman and two boys, and with great joy observed the Stanhope arms at one corner of it. This he presented to my lord, imagining he would be greatly pleased and delighted to have such a proof of the antiquity of his family; and to prevent all disputes of precedency for the future, my lord has inscribed under the figures, Adam Stanhope of Eden garden Egypt, and Eve Stanhope his wife, with their two sons Cain Stanhope and Abel Stanhope; his genealogy would have been indisputable, if he had put Seth Stanhope instead of Cain; but the humour was really a good one, as you may see I thought it, by writing you such a long story about it.

Pray have you seen the epistle of Ann Boleyn? I am sure if you have, you are charmed with it. Adieu! I write you no news at all, because I do not know what sort of news would amuse you most; and I hope it is no news at all to tell you, dear Miss Carter, how much I am, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *July* 13, 1743.

Without troubling you with a long detail of melancholy excuses, I flatter myself, dear Miss Talbot, you will easily take it on my word that nothing but a real necessity should so long have prevented my answering your last kind Letter.

I have not seen the pedigree you mention, but I believe that loss was very well recompensed by your agreeable relation of Lord Chesterfield's wit, which extremely diverted me. I have for some time had but little leisure to read, but now hope to be more disengaged, and have just entered upon Homer and Cicero's Tusculan Questions, both which, by the advantage of a very wretched memory, are entirely new to me. I fear reading Tully's Philosophy will not tend greatly to my edification, as there is one half of it I am neither able nor willing to practise, having no sort of ambition for the great wisdom of becoming insensible. What mortal would wish for the power of conquering that *Lætitia* he with so much stoical gravity absolutely forbids, who has ever felt the exquisite pleasure of receiving a Letter from Miss Talbot.

You must certainly have seen Mrs. Squire's scheme of the longitude, and I make no doubt understood it; but for my own part I never beheld so incomprehensible a thing in my whole life. Dear Miss Talbot, what language is it? how lamentably are people deceived by the title page. In the very little I was capable of reading, I could not help observing a marvellous singularity in the pointing, which looks as if the book was to be chanted. I am told the project is thought ingenious, and if you should happen to be of that opinion, 'tis ten to one but I may take up the book again, which I have at present thrown by in a great rage (at my own stupidity) and study myself half mad to find out the meaning of it.

I imagine by this time you are in full enjoyment of the pleasures of the country, for which you seem to have so just a taste. I am at present a little disappointed in being debarred the delight I used to take in rambling about by myself, by a set of rakish fellows from some ship who infest this place, and are a great disturbance to me. So I dare not walk now without a companion of true Amazonian bravery, who fears nothing but apparitions and frogs, from which I have promised to secure her, if she will defend me from what I am most afraid of, May-bugs and men; so by the

strength of this alliance we both proceed in great safety.

I have enclosed you a song, and the answer, which are at present the reigning topic of discourse at Canterbury and 15 miles round. If I had not heard you say you were not fond of music, I should greatly regret I could not send you the tune too, for 'tis most enchantingly pretty. Perhaps you will think it odd the answer should be called a *Lampoon*, but this is a word the most in fashion at Canterbury of any place I know. Every thing that people do not like, or understand, is comprehended under the name of lampoon, whether it be prose, or verse, song, riddle, panegyric, or funeral elegy; and I am persuaded that if Mrs. Squire's book is arrived there, it is called a lampoon.

I have just taken it into my head to be greatly surprized how I can have the assurance to write so much nonsense to you, and perhaps you will think it a still higher degree of confidence that I flatter myself with the hopes of hearing from you much sooner than I deserve: you must give me leave to assure you, there are very few things in this world can give so much pleasure, to dear Miss Talbot, &c.

Miss

MISS TALBOT TO MRS. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Oct.* 5, 1743.

I HAVE long been accusing myself of ingratitude in leaving a Letter of Miss Carter's so long unanswered, and a Letter too which gave me such infinite entertainment, and for which I was the more obliged to you as it came very opportunely to relieve me in a grievous fit of the spleen, when nothing less original than your notion of a lampoon in a country town could have set me laughing so heartily. It was however this splenetick disposition of mine that prevented my answering you immediately. I was extremely ill most part of June and July, which was most vexatiously and perversely timed, as it threw a gloom over our visit to the Bishop of Gloucester, very unsuitable to the agreeable schemes we had formed, and to the cheerful reception he gave us; he is, in the most amiable sense of the word, one of the most companionable tempers I ever met with.

We were all of us ill and uncomfortable at the same time; at length through bad roads and worse fears, we got back again into the balmy air of Oxfordshire. I have ever since been employed not absolutely in fox-hunting, but in a chase that engages

gages me almost in as hard riding and more constant, the pursuit of health. This task of exercise and a house full of company, have really left me no time for writing, but at least they have restored me spirits enough for it which I had not before: I have even found myself equal to the fatigues of a horse race, without murmuring at any of its amusements, or wishing it a day or an hour shorter.

Having thus writ you in Colly Cibber's style an apology for my life this whole summer, you may perhaps be in some hopes that I have nearly done for the present with that important subject self; but when I tell you I am just engaged in and extremely diverted with reading Montaigne, you will lower your expectations, and allow me to go on with my egotisms. To the history of the summer shall therefore succeed the plan of the winter, since we are now just settling into the quiet comfortable life we shall lead till after Christmas, most mechanically and faithfully day after day.

Imagine me then every morning —— no upon second thoughts that shall be the subject of my next Letter, and I shall be excessively disappointed if you have not the curiosity to write to me immediately and ask me for it. At the same time I must engage you, if you love that same sort of regular clock-like life that we do, to send me the plan of your

own

own employments and amusements, that whenever my imagination wanders towards Kent, it may know where, and in what kind of engagement to find you. There is something so peculiarly agreeable in employing an idle hour to go the rounds of those friends and acquaintance of whom I think with the most vanity and pleasure, and image them in all the varieties of every cheerful employment, all of them happy in themselves, and now and then, when they have nothing better to do, throwing away a thought upon me.

If you ever read Montaigne pray tell me what you think of him. To me he seems infinitely amusing. His character lively and original, and what with right and serious principles would have deserved esteem as well as liking: but unfortunately he wants them to a very great degree; that is, he was a man of natural excellent genius, but spoiled by the vicious pratique du monde, and the indulgence of his own humours, so that his book may be dangerous to an infinite number of people, as it must be entertaining to all.

You will think I have chose my studies very curiously this year, when I mention Ariosto for another. He too is wildly and extravagantly charming, but certainly has beauties proportionable to his faults. I should think myself extremely obliged to you on behalf of the whole family, if you could recommend

recommend any book to us that would in any degree make us amends, for having read through Don Quixote last year, by tolerably supplying his place when we want to laugh a little after supper. I dare say such sort of books are to be met with, though not so excellent, yet at least amusing, and there is nobody's taste I would sooner trust than your's. This is another reason for your writing to me very soon, and if you do not, you have no idea how much you will mortify, &c. &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Nov.* 11, 1743.

I have I think, dear Miss Carter, shewn great respect to your plain work by so long deferring to write to you, a thousand nameless accidents have been the cause of it. I will take the first opportunity of reading Erasmus, since he was a favourite of your's and of my Lord Falkland's *. Our family authors must be English, and before I received your's we were very happily fixed in a

* But Mrs. Carter's maturer judgment induced her to alter in some degree this favourable opinion of Erasmus. See the Memoirs of her Life, p. 258, quarto edition.

scheme

scheme of reading through all Sir Richard Steele's papers, which will probably last us as long as we stay in the country, and this orderly and sociable way of reading them gives a novelty to them, though I thought we had been perfectly acquainted with them before; they are read to us every day after breakfast and supper, ten o'clock is the hour that generally concludes them at both those times. After chapel we retire to our apartments, if a sunshine morning does not tempt us abroad, and I am employed in embroidering after a flower piece, or copying angels from Carlo Maratti, not from Ariosto, I assure you, for never I think were ideas so little angelical, or indeed so offensively absurd as his upon that subject. My English vanity is quite charmed with the preference you give to Spenser; however, there are certainly fine things in Ariosto, if one does not consider them as belonging to a whole. I am told indeed this was the way in which he writ his poem, in detached pieces just as the present humour, or sometimes any little burlesque accident, or personal pique dictated a canto or an episode to his various imagination; in this view he is a most entertaining writer, but much injured surely, when set up as an epic poet, and subject to rules he never thought of.

I think this digression is something like one of his. Let me return to my little domestic history. A principal figure in it, as you must have often heard

me

me say, is Lady Mary Grey, who prefers the making our retirement comfortable to us, to all the allurements of a gay town, and a new house. There is a sort of vanity in commending one's friends, but indeed without her my hours would pass very heavily to what they do now. In a morning she has generally the goodness to read to me, and we have just finished Tully's Offices, and begun Moliere. In the afternoon from about its beginning to be dark till six o'clock, when all the family meet to read snug, we two amuse ourselves, by the exercise of walking in a large unfurnished room, where sometimes we have the advantage of moon-light, and always that of conversation in that way, that makes this hour the most agreeable of the four and twenty. After seven, quadrille is called in a little to vary the objects of our attention from history and spinning wheels, to aces black and red. Because I have said nothing of the time before breakfast do not imagine me immoderately lazy; I seldom rise later than seven, and those hours are spent in reading; Dr. Clarke is one of my morning authors, another very favourite one is Epictetus, and I am infinitely provoked that there is no translation of that part of his precepts which Arrian has preserved, and which I am vastly curious to see *; not

* This was the first hint of Miss Talbot's desire to see a translation of Epictetus, which afterwards induced Mrs. Carter to undertake that work.

so desirous as you probably will be before this time to see an end of this immeasurable long Letter; to which I will only add the assurance of my being, &c. &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Dec.* 27, 1743.

We most gladly admit you, dear Miss Carter, a third in our moon-light walks, and I think myself seriously obliged to you for leaving even in imagination the gay and cheerful engagements of Canterbury to accompany me in this retirement. I am sorry we have no music to heighten your idea of our amusements; but a sorrowful truth it is, that I have no sort of ear, nor any kind of genius that way. This is however a truth which I do not unnecessarily confess to all the world; and indeed I think it too unsociable a thing to dissent from any rational entertainment that the greater part of the world approves, and are fond of, so that I am really grown to love music out of deference to the better taste of others. That you may not however think me absolutely incapable of being *moved with concord of sweet sounds*, and therefore break off all

all correspondence with me, for fear I should engage you in treasons, plots, and all the dreadful things that Shakespeare is pleased to enumerate, I will own the having been highly delighted with several songs in Sampson, and especially with the choruses. I heard that oratorio performed this winter in one of the College Halls, and I believe to the full as finely as it ever was in town: and having never heard any oratorio before, I was extremely struck with such a kind of harmony as seems the only language adapted to devotion. I really cannot help thinking this kind of entertainment must necessarily have some effect in correcting or moderating at least the levity of the age; and let an audience be ever so thoughtless, they can scarcely come away, I should think, without being the better for an evening so spent. I heartily wish you had been with me when I heard it.

I can imagine your mornings happily spent in the study you mention, and cannot but frequently lament my own unhappiness in being confined to dull imperfect translations of the noblest authors. The translation of Livy that we are reading together in a family way, is absolutely the most absurd thing I ever met with. The greatest sentiments clothed in the meanest words, raise in one such a mixture of admiration and laughter, that I cannot tell whether to be most pleased or angry. *The Samnites*

nites (he told us in the midst of a most interesting narration) *fought for church and chimney as the saying is. The Lucanians a parcel of Rascallions run away in Querpo. Wardens of the Goldsmith's company* at Rome, were what I believe nobody but our excellent translator ever thought of, nor did Livy, I imagine, when Roman Virgins and Matrons, Senators, and Heroes were his subjects, talk of *sweethearts, valets de chambre,* nor *Dictator's lacquies,* or a thousand low expressions which I will not teize you with, however they may have put me out of patience.

I looked into Dr. Brown this summer when I was so ill and out of spirits, that though I am convinced the book is an ingenious one, it left no ingenious impression on my mind. I have lately met with a most dire disappointment that I must tell you. In one of the Bibliotheques, I read an abstract of a little Italian book, written by M. Bandiera, Trattato degli studie delle donne, and was vastly pleased with the justice he seemed inclined to do us, in asserting our claim to some degree of understanding, and capacity for improvement; already had I determined to send for the book out of Italy on purpose, when in the second part, he takes it into his head to forbid our reading poetry, and dancing, the two entertainments that of all others I have a passion for. After all,

I think

I think I must get the book, and like just as much of it as suits my humour, and not regard the rest.

Adieu! dear Miss Carter, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Jan.* 23, 1744.

It is neither business nor amusement, but a scruple that sometimes takes me about writing nonsense, which has prevented me, my dear Miss Talbot, from sooner answering your Letter.

I was extremely diverted with your quotations from Livy, the style very much resembles that of a celebrated orator in this county; who in the petition for the King before his sermon, prays for *George and family*. His discourses, however, are generally in a more elevated strain, for he talks of, *silver streams flying over the tops of mountains*, and is very fond of quoting the *divine poet Aristotle*.

I do not doubt but you are perfectly conversant with this comet which is paying us a visit, and begins to make so fine an appearance; some of my acquaintance here, and myself, have been very assiduous

assiduous in our attendance upon it, though to no great purpose, as we know but very little of the matter. However we have as much the credit of it, as if we knew more; and have heard so many observations and predictions of our uttering, which we never did utter, that it is to us really a very merry phænomenon.

Positively I do not know what to say to you, unless I tell you the sorrowful scrape I have drawn myself into, about love; bless me, what business had I to talk about things I know nothing about! As my ill stars would have it, I happened to express great pity for people under these dolorous circumstances, which drew me into a dispute with an antagonist so violent, that she distributes the words of fool, nonsense, wilful obstinacy, &c. &c. without reserve, amongst the whole tribe of lovers, and asserts that all compassion for them is misapplied and ridiculous. Not content with the first engagement, she constantly attacks me every time I see her; I am not yet quite a convert, but I believe out of mere indolence I shall at last give up the point, and leave all lovers to hang or drown themselves as they think fit.

A very imprudent match which gave rise to all these debates, now gives place to the general conversation occasioned by the death of Sir John Hales,

Hales*, which you may have seen in the news, but probably not his character, which was most unaccountably singular: with an estate of ten or twelve thousand a year, he has for a long time shut himself up in a great house, without so much as a servant. His children were not suffered to come near him, nor any body else, for if ever he espied a human being near the house, he immediately ran and locked the door. To avoid his being seen or spoken to, the person who went to market for him, found his orders in a note, in a basket in the stable, which when filled was returned to the same place; the only conversible animals he had about him were six hogs almost as old as their master, whom he fed with great care. The estate round his house which is in a very pretty situation, lies quite untenanted and uncultivated, the horses and other cattle run quite wild, and in a state of nature, all over the grounds. As he had lived, so he died quite alone, and was not discovered for some time after his death. At the change of affairs which soon took place, it is not

* Sir John Hales, Bart. was the head of a very ancient and opulent family, settled in Kent for many generations. He was a Roman catholic, as his descendants still are, and his father Sir Edward, was created Earl of Tenterden by K. James II. after his abdication. Sir John died at his seat near Canterbury, where his great grandson Sir Edward still resides.

to be told the consternation and bitter wailings of the owls and bats, who had for so many years had quiet possession of several of the best rooms, who after having reposed for several years on down beds, and velvet cushions, are now by the unmerciful heirs turned adrift into the wide world to seek a cold hard lodging in a hollow tree.

What was the true spring of Sir John Hale's strange behaviour nobody can tell; he was said to be a man of sense and letters, and sometimes did very generous actions though in a strange way; in most parts of his character he was a perfect misanthrope. The estate decends to his grandson, a very pretty young gentleman, who it is believed will make a much better use of it than his predecessor. The originality of the character I thought would please you, and can only hope I have not made it too long.

As I believe you a friend to every useful design, I could not help copying the inclosed proposals *, which I doubt not you will read with that serious attention, so weighty an affair demands.

I shall soon shift my quarters to Dr. Lynch's, where I shall hope to have the pleasure of hearing from you, &c.

* Proposals for printing by subscription "The whole Art and Mystery of Punning," &c. &c. See the new edition of Mrs. Carter's works, added to her "Memoirs." Page 462 of the quarto edition.

MISS TALBOT TO MRS. CARTER.

London, *April* 12, 1744.

You sent me, dear Miss Carter, so grand a scheme to consider of, that I really think you could not sooner expect an answer; and even after all this time taken for consideration, since I have neither any of the ready made wit, (which I hope to provide myself with an ample stock of, by subscribing for three or four dozen sets of the trifling undertaking you mention) nor can be so happy as to have any assistance from the professoress in fine speeches, I shall wave saying any thing farther on the subject at present.

I write you a stupid Letter after a long silence, for the sake of receiving a lively answer. You cannot think how much good your Letters do me, and mine can do you no harm; but really if I had writ to you in the humour I was some time ago, I must have dated it from the Cave of Trophonius.

I shall not trouble you with town news, though I have had a great mind to enquire from you some news of the comet and the fleet, both of which I imagined your intimacy with the stars and sea nymphs might have given you great information of; but spleen and indolence quite got the better of

me; but the bright half of the year is coming, and I promise to mend.

Have you seen Voltaire's Merope yet? a play perfectly interesting without a syllable of love in it. However, though I am sensible of its merit, I am so angry with Voltaire's French impertinence in the preface, where he falls at once on all our performances, in music, painting, or dramatic poetry, and insists upon it that our nation has an utter incapacity for succeeding in any of the three; that I own I did not read it unprejudiced; and was most heartily rejoiced on comparing it with Maffei's, to find it fall ten thousand degrees short of the nobleness, the nature and simplicity of its original. If you observe, the character of Ergasto (the young Cresfonte,) is infinitely amiable and interesting in the Italian, while in the French you are scarce any further interested for him, than as you know him to be the hero of the play.

To be sure you have long ago read The Pleasures of the Imagination. I fancy that poem must read with double pleasure in the country, where one is surrounded with all the charming objects he describes. I am sure you could not but be very much entertained with it, there seemed to me to be a spirit and a beauty in it, that I have seldom met with in modern poetry. But if you are for a good sober piece, that has a great deal of good

sense in it, and but few absurdities, pray read the play of Regulus *. The run of the town is against it, but whether it is the dullness of the poetry, or the nobleness of the sentiments that makes fine folks dislike it, I am unwilling to determine.

Here I am writing a volume, and the more I say, the more I find to say; at this rate I shall never have done, unless I make an effort to break the charm, and assure you I am, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *May* 10, 1744.

I complained of my splenetick disposition to you, my dear Miss Carter, some time ago, for having prevented my writing to you, but it will now be your turn to complain of the contrary, since I am set down to write to you just now, because it is the only employment that suited my humour, and a great deal pleasanter than my own melancholy thoughts. In this disposition it would be a great consolation to me, to know what had occasioned the whimsical fit of spleen you complained of, and if you have not by this time forgot what it

* A Tragedy by W. Havard, published in this year.

was,

was, pray be charitable enough to gratify my curiosity. I promise you I will receive it with true sisterly candour, as I am so great a sufferer in that way myself, and I think nobody can be so, more directly against their conscience than I am, for I do not believe any body was ever more thoroughly versed in the theory of cheerfulness, or more convinced of the duty. Indeed I have no notion that any body can be seriously in the spleen; I think a very little serious reflection enough to set life and all its concerns in a very different light from that in which fancy places it upon every little vexation. But almost every body is subject to a sort of waking dreams of misery. The exact contrast of those fine gilded castles in the air, which we visionary people are perpetually building. It is one of these sad dreams which sends me to seek comfort in your company this afternoon. I had been meditating long on the illness of the best friend I have in the world, and it had cast a gloom over every idea; what would else have entertained my fancy, had a cloud thrown over it.

By good luck I was prevented finishing my Letter, and can now end it in a gayer tone, and talk a little "like folks of this world," not that the folks of this world talk wise enough, to make one very fond I think of imitating them. I am really weary of the town topics of conversation, which

which are all run through at every visit, and shall change them with pleasure for the discourse of hay-making and harvest.

The author of the Pleasures of Imagination, is one Dr. Akenside*, a very young man, and was when he writ it but eighteen. 'Tis well we have some new genius's rising among us, poor Mr. Pope† is in a very declining way, and not likely to do honor to our country much longer. You ask if I mind politics; there was a time when I attended to them extremely, and thought I should have been to blame if the affairs of Europe had stood still from my neglect of them. At present I give only just a glance at the gloomy side of things (and sure a dreadful gloomy one it is) and then sit down in great quietness, rejoicing I have nothing to do to consider of it. One would imagine every body was in the same easy way of thinking, for whatever you folks on the sea coast may suffer from foreign or domestic enemies, we here talk of nothing but balls and masquerades.

* This celebrated poem was published in this year 1744; but Akenside was born in 1721, so that he was now in his twenty-third year. It is not known from what authority Miss Talbot asserted that he was only eighteen years of age when he wrote it.

† He died in little more than a fortnight after; May 10, 1744.

There

There is a young Venetian here, wife to the Venetian ambassador, who is highly delighted with English liberty, and flies about like a bird just escaped from a cage; she is little more than sixteen, extremely pretty, and having been bred up in all the simplicity of a convent, says every thing that comes into her head without the least art, and furnishes much amusement to all the court.

You insult me for never talking nonsense; I have written all this long Letter to shew you that your insult was ill grounded. And as for laughing, I think it one of the greatest privileges of human nature, and make use of it as often as ever it comes in my way: I am glad to hear it is so often in your's; the being able to imagine those one wishes well to, happy and cheerful, is next to the being so oneself. Rest ye merry. I am going in the spirit of self-denial to buy a moderate fan, while all the fashionable world are displaying fans of two yards wide, and every fine lady measures her genius, by the length of this genteel —— I am as much at a loss for a phrase, as you was for a simile, mean time the coach waits, so adieu! &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *May* 24, four in the morning.

I have a strong inclination, dear Miss Talbot, to visit you like an apparition at this unseasonable hour, which I may safely indulge as it will do you no harm, for I may talk to you as long as I please, without any danger of disturbing your slumbers, or depriving you of an agreeable dream.

I thought myself infinitely obliged to you for your Letter, though I feel some little scruples about answering one part of it, for as there are but very few people in the world to whom I would so unwillingly appear in a ridiculous light, 'tis very odd I should acquaint you with a folly, which I have had prudence enough to conceal from all the world besides. However if you can have any curiosity about so insignificant a person as I, it will give me pleasure to gratify it, and laugh at me as much as you think proper, if you will laugh by yourself.

The splenetic fit of which you enquire the cause, was occasioned by some apprehensions, that a person for whom I have a great love was going to be married; and as I have read in a book, that people when they marry are dead and buried to all former attachments; I could not think of resigning a friend-

a friendship which constitutes some of the brightest intervals of my life, without a very severe uneasiness; for to converse with her in the dull, formal, indifferent way of a common acquaintance, was a change I could not think of with any degree of temper. Now you have set me upon the history of my own nonsense, arm yourself with patience, for you must hear it out in all its instances, one of which was, that I might have been freed in a minute from the pain which this groundless suspicion gave me, if I had told her of it; but a certain vile obstinacy which I endeavoured to persuade myself was a laudable pride, prevented my asking her any questions, and I detested the thoughts of getting information by any more indirect means, so unless she had penetration enough to discover my uneasiness, and so much good-nature as to deliver me from it, I should have wrought myself into a firm belief that the affair was quite certain; and by this time you might have heard of my being run wild into a wood, and hopping about from tree to tree like a squirrel, and feeding on nuts and acorns. Whether you will laugh at, or pity me most for this strange delicacy of friendship I cannot tell, but as I have so honestly confessed all my weakness, I hope you will have the charity to give me your advice how to conquer it, against the calamity should, as it will

in all probability some time or other, befal me in good earnest.

As I imagine you are by this time in the country, I congratulate you on the fine weather, which is so necessary to make it agreeable. I hope you are perfectly sensible to all the charms of a South West wind, which surely blows from Paradise, and brings with it all the sweets of the garden of Eden. I shall long to hear some account of your rural amusements; for my own part I am at present engaged in a very eager, and I may add a violent pursuit of health. I get up at four, read for an hour, then set forth a walking, and without vanity I may pretend to be one of the best walkers of the age. I had at first engaged three or four poor souls to their sorrow in this ambulatory scheme, and 'tis not to be told the tracts of land we rambled over; but I happen to be much too volatile for my suffering fellow-travellers, who come panting and grumbling at a considerable distance, and labor along like *Christian* climbing up the hill *difficulty*, till at length they quite sink into the *slough of despond*. (Have you ever read "Pilgrim's Progress?") I often divert myself by proposing in the midst of my walk to call at places a dozen miles off, to hear the universal squall they set up, that I intend to be the death of them. Terrible are the descriptions that they give at our return, of the mischiefs occasioned by

by my impetuous rapidity, though I protest I do not know of any harm I have done, except pulling up a few trees by the roots, carrying off the sails of a windmill, and over-setting half a dozen straggling cottages that stood in my way.

My sister has desired to be excused going with me any more, till she has learnt to fly, and another of our troop sent me word last night she could not possibly venture, as our last walk had absolutely dislocated all her bones; so I have nobody to depend on now but my youngest sister, who is as strong as a little Welch horse; so she trudges after me with great alacrity, and promises never to forsake me if I should walk to the North pole. As we daily improve in this peripatetic way of living, I propose to do myself the pleasure of breakfasting with you some morning in Oxfordshire, from whence I shall proceed to dine with Miss Ward in London, drink tea with Miss Lynch in Canterbury, and dream of you all the same night at Deal.

I don't know what to say to you next, for I am quite weary of talking of myself, unless I entertain you with the sweetly flowing syllables of *Kietlenski*, *Wilkousti*, *Lazovyski*, &c. a set of Polish officers who were taken by an English man of war, and brought prisoners here. I have often seen them, for they can find nobody to understand, or converse with them here but my father. 'Tis

quite

quite diverting to hear what a confusion of languages there is among them. One talks Latin, another French, a third Polish, a fourth high Dutch, and a fifth something that sounds like no language at all. But what entertained me most, was to hear one of them who is a great disputant, talk for a considerable time about religion in French, to a person who understood not one word of the language, and she making replies and quotations in English, which he understood just as little; so no doubt the discourse tended much to the edification of both. I was going to say a great deal more to you, but luckily my sister came in and told me, whoever I was writing such an unmerciful Letter to, would never have patience to read it; so I e'en follow her admonition, and conclude, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *June* 27, 1744.

I HOPE you are sensible, my dear Miss Carter, that I have taken due time to consider what consolatory advice I can give you, in case the calamity you seem so apprehensive of should happen, and your unfaithful friend forsake the society of us spinsters,

spinsters. I really know no better expedient than that you should be beforehand with her, since I have always observed that the people who set out upon a journey, are much less affected at parting, than those who stay on in the same situation without any variety of new objects to dispel their melancholy. By this means you will make sure of an inseparable friend, since I have read in a book (David Simple by name) that a real friend is only to be found in that state. If you do not like this scheme, you must turn Roman catholic, and go into a convent, where you may have a whole sisterhood of friends secluded from the rest of the world.

If that project does not suit you, why then, my dear Miss Carter, we must e'en lower our ideas of friendship to the pitch of common life, and be content with loving and esteeming people constantly and affectionately amid a variety of thwarting, awkward circumstances, that forbid all possibility of spending our lives together. Let people in such a situation be glad that they have known enough of one another to make affection mutual, and then let them resign the complete enjoyment of it, as inconsistent with such a world as this, and accommodate themselves to the perverse changes of a varying life, with as much calmness and philo-

sophy

sophy as those changes were perhaps meant to perfect us in.

I have not preached out my thirty minutes yet, have I? Alas! Alas! does not my entering so very deeply and seriously into this subject, look as if I had been a good deal touched with it myself? One of my most favourite, most amiable friends has been married for several years, and I experience that the difference of circumstances make an alteration in the ease and frequency of our seeing one another, which robs me of the gayest, happiest moments I ever enjoyed. But our affection for one another continues the same it ever was; and indeed if ever so many people instead of one had a right to share it with me, I should feel not the least jealousy, as I have no notion of monopolies in friendship; and provided people love me with sincerity, in the moderate degree I deserve, they are welcome to love as many more as they please, and only furnish me with so many more objects of affection. I see her happy, I see her act becomingly in her station, we sometimes lament the distance that it puts between us, but are upon the whole mighty reasonable people, and very well satisfied that every thing should be as it is.

Well but all this while you have never walked over to breakfast with me in your seven league boots

boots that you seem to have borrowed out of the Fairy Tales. As for your sister I'll put a force on my inclinations if she comes along with you, and not admit her; for it would be having no spirit at all not to resent such an injury as she did me, in putting an end to your Letter when you was so well inclined to prolong my entertainment. However upon your intercession I may probably relent, if you promise not to root up any of my beloved elms in your way hither. They furnish me this hot summer with such an agreeable shade, that I should be unpardonable to part with them so easily, even for an hour spent in your company. Beneath their shelter I converse with a variety of authors, and pass away the time in an amusing indolence, beginning my day some two hours later than you do, and living through the whole of it with a dullness of temper, ill suited to those inspiring beauties which summer diffuses all around.

There are times when even the magnificence of the sky, the fair extensions of a flowery lawn, the verdure of the groves, the harmony of rural sounds, and the universal fragrance of the balmy air, strike us with no agreeable sensations,

"What does of their sweetness those blossoms beguile,
That meadow, those daisies why do they not smile?"

nothing

nothing surely but the ungrateful perverseness of one's own humour. This reflection throws human happiness in a most mortifying light. If these most beautiful, most innocent enjoyments, are so very imperfect, so sadly unsatisfactory, where shall the fugitive be found? There only where it shall no longer be fugitive or uncertain. You see I am in a sermonizing humour, and do what I will I fall into the style every moment. Adieu! I will no longer trust myself with the pen, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *July* 20, 1744.

I HOPE, my dear Miss Talbot, you will not again think it necessary to limit yourself to the term of thirty minutes, for really you are not one of those orators whom I could wish confined to a Clepsydra. I could with the most pleasing attention listen to such discourses as your's, "from morn to noon, from noon till dewy eve;" especially when you preach only your own doctrine; for as to David Simple, (though I respect a great many of his opinions) I am somewhat inclined to be heterodox, not

not that I am going to trouble you with my reasons for dissenting from him, which I have at this present time of writing totally forgot, but hope you will believe they are right good ones.

As for your second scheme I am utterly forbid to think of it, from an extraordinary tenderness to the safety of my person, as I do not find you have mentioned any expedient how I should avoid breaking my neck, which I believe would certainly follow my ever getting within side of them, for "libera io naqui et vissi, et morrò sciolta." I am something too volatile to live for ages "in shady cloysters mewed;" a scheme very inconsistent with my principles, who am so real a friend to universal liberty, that I make a scruple of keeping birds in a cage, and did but last week refuse the offer of a very musical linnet.

But now, dear Miss Talbot, it is time for me most gratefully and sincerely to thank you for the serious part of your Letter, which I hope will contribute to make me wiser and better: of which to my sorrow there is abundant need. I must however in justice to myself tell you it was not from a contracted principle of monopolizing a person who I think possesses every amiable quality, that gave me the uneasiness I troubled you with; for her favourites always become mine, and could I flatter myself the case would be parallel to what you de-

scribe, I could bear it with tolerable tranquillity; but I am persuaded it would be quite different. At all events, be that as it may, your advice is equally good, and I shall pay a much greater regard to it, than if it was dictated by Seneca or Epictetus.

I make no doubt but you have read *Siris* *, as I have to no great purpose you will think, as I fairly confess I have no clear idea what one half of it means: what I can understand of it extremely pleases me, but possibly its being beyond the reach of my comprehension is the cause that some parts of the book appear entirely visionary, and more like the glittering confusion of a lively imagination, than any regular system of distinct reasoning. Pray what is your opinion of tar-water?

As I am as perfect a Hamadryad as you can possibly be, I should pay the utmost deference to your favourite trees. I hope by this time, the fair face of the creation has recovered all its charms, and that you are no longer insensible to the beauties of a season when every sense and every heart is joy. Where indeed below the stars shall happi-

* By Bishop Berkeley, of whom Pope says with more than his usual truth of character, that he possessed "every virtue under heaven." This ingenious and eccentric work was first published in this year.

ness

ness be found, if it flies from a mind like your's! If I might venture to dispute any point with you, who understand every thing so much better than myself, I should be inclined to philosophize a little with you upon this melancholy reflection. Give me leave however, dear Miss Talbot, most sincerely to wish, you may very seldom, if it were possible never, feel any stronger argument against human happiness than such an accidental flagging of the spirits as an hour's enlivening conversation, or a hundred varied amusements might easily conquer. These transient fits of *oscitation*, and inactivity, are perhaps no more than a necessary relaxation to the mind, and serve to quicken its faculties to a more lively sensation of returning pleasure.

I am greatly inclined to be an advocate for the happiness of human life, and you will allow my opinion to be tolerably impartial, when I tell you that I am at this moment talking in downright contradiction to what I feel, however —— luckily for you, the want of a frank puts an end to my speculations, for I believe all the philosophy I might utter in another sheet would not be worth sixpence to you, so adieu! &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Sept.* 7, 1744.

At length, dear Miss Carter, I have broke the sleepy charm in which indolence has kept me, et me voici, mademoiselle, à votre service. How have you done this age, how have you amused yourself? what have you read, what have you writ? and what kind of speculations have you been engaged in?

Have you read the new Fables, writ in the manner of Gay, but I think more agreeably? they are really very pretty. Dr. Young has now I suppose done with his "Night Thoughts," he has given us one for every night in the week. I do not know whether you critics and fine folks will allow them to be poems; but this I am certain of, that they are excellent in their kind, though they may be of a kind peculiar to themselves. He shews us the Muse in her ancient dignity, when she inhabited temples, and spoke an immortal language, long before sing-song came into being*.

You

* With respect to Dr. Young's poetry, Mrs. Carter, as will be seen, agreed with Miss Talbot; but the Editor has heard Mrs. Carter say that she was much disappointed in his conversation.

You ask my opinion of tar-water, as if you knew how great a quack I am in my neighbourhood, I have not however ventured to try it on my poor neighbours, though by what I can learn of it, it is very good if properly applied.

'Tis very hard I think the good man, who published his opinion of it from no other motive than a general benevolence, should be so vilely abused for it, as he has been by various paltry scribblers. But their abuses are supportable; the thing not to be borne is their spirit of panegyrising, which has pursued the ashes of Mr. Pope so unmercifully, that I could almost expect a satire from the other world to lash them for it. Seriously it is a mortifying thing to see we have nobody among us that can, or that will write any thing tolerable to honour the memory of such a man.

There is something towards the end of your Letter that gives me real uneasiness, as it mentions your own being in low spirits, at the very time you was giving me excellent advice against indulging them. However, I hope we both easily recover from the

sation. It appeared to her light, trifling, and full of puns. The last part of this character might have been expected. The quaint expressions and tendency to wit, even in his most serious and affecting compositions, would naturally lead to playing upon words in cheerful and easy discourse.

gloomy

gloomy fit (which a thousand little incidents throw one into now and then) because we are both I believe very right in our theory, and equally advocates for the happiness of human life. One may allow it I think to be greatly an overbalance to its sufferings, and yet find it at the best so trifling and imperfect as not to be more attached to it, than gratitude and patience dictate, who by the way oblige us to a much more cheerful and contented enjoyment of life, than many serious writers are apt to attend to.

I do not know whether I ever asked you how you liked Madame de Sévigné's Letters. I am at present much entertained with them. There are six volumes in French, two only of which are very prettily translated by an ingenious man who is since dead; and who took them from a spurious and imperfect edition. I wonder nobody has ever undertaken these, though they would require a good many notes, and a very elegant turn of expression.

I have been talking of books all this while, and perhaps you may be more in a humour to hear of the gayeties of a horse race, which I have lately partaken with as much life and giddiness as if I loved or cared for nothing else. Even you would have been pleased to see such a collection of pretty women as our ball-room was filled with: and as it

is generally a set of neighbours who meet there, and we of this county are good kind of sociable folks, you cannot easily conceive any thing more lively and good-tempered. I add this that you may see I converse with the living as well as the dead: and now that you may not die that saddest of all deaths, mourir d'ennui, I will conclude. I forgot to say that the Bishop of Oxford desires you will for the future enclose your Letters to him, that I may not be cheated of my fourth side ——.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Oct.* 9, 1744.

I can give no very entertaining answer, dear Miss Talbot to your obliging enquiries after my proceedings, which will furnish but a dull history, for I seldom remember to have passed my time so disagreeably as these last two months. I have had vile head-aches which have confined me most days for some hours to such a lifeless state of *faineantise*, as might have appeared sufficiently mortifying to me, if I had not felt a more sensible pain from the sad apprehensions of losing one of my best

best friends by the small-pox; this with a constant succession of illness in our own family, has left me but little leisure for that variety of employments which amuse me agreeably enough at another time. Indeed I cannot tell when I shall be able to get into my former track again, for this long confinement has rendered me so extremely plodding and stupid, that I begin to fear all my gay whimsical ideas, now I am tolerably at ease, will dwindle into a sober relish for comfortable life. I don't know that for this week I have formed any one scheme but what has been entirely practicable, or said or done any one thing that people could either be offended or pleased with. It is not to be described how perfectly muzzy I look, nor what a strange fondness I have lately acquired for dumplings. Nay, I am so far gone, that I much question whether instead of keeping my senses awake with an enlivening supper on green tea, I could not with very solemn satisfaction regale myself upon lambs wool, or wigs and ale, and get very quietly to sleep by eight o'clock without the interruption of a single dream. In short, my dear, castle building seems to be utterly at an end, and instead of soaring in the air as volatile as a sky lark, I shall soon be reduced to waddle upon earth like a fat goose: dear Miss Talbot, have compassion on my deplorable case,

and

and help me to remove this vis inertiæ, which has laid hold on all my faculties, by the most effectual means in the world, a letter from you, which will certainly give me one of the most enlivening and happy sensations I am capable of receiving, and I hope entirely raise me from this bathos of dullness, and set me a flying again with so much alacrity that —Sublime feriam sidera vertice*.

Well but after all, I have forgot I must say something about books; I have not seen the new Fables you mention, unless they are a collection of some which were first printed separately by one Mr. Grevil, and which I thought extremely pretty. Pour les lettres de Madame de Sévigné elles m'ont toujours charmées. On y trouve tout ce qu'il y a de poli, et de spirituel dans la langue Françoise. Il me semble aussi qu'elles donnent aussi un portrait très naturel du cœur de l'auteur, qui à vrai dire, à quelques égards vaut mieux que sa tête, sur tout quand elle parle de la religion dont elle se forme des ideés assez ridicules. Etes vous, Mademoiselle, du sentiment de ces gens, qui s'ennuyent tant de cette affection outré qu'elle témoigne pour sa fille, ou croyez vous avec moi, que c'est à

* "Above the crowd I then shall rise
And touch with lofty head the skies."
Duncombe's Horace, Book I. Ode I.

cette

cette seule circonstance que l'on doit la plus part des beautés de son esprit? C'est dommage qu'on n'ait pas conservé les réponses de Madame Grignan. La vivacité de la mère auroit fait un contraste fort agréable avec la froideur de la fille. Pour la traduction de ces lettres, je crois qu'on y réussiroit fort mal. Il y a un infinité de tours d'expression qui dependent entierement du genre de la langue Françoise et feroit une fort mauvaise figure dans la nôtre.

I think I am next to proceed upon Dr. Young, who well deserves the beautiful encomiums you give him, I really regret there are no more than seven nights in a week, instead of exclaiming as I heard a lady when she was told of a fifth—— "What will that man never have done complaining."

But as greatly as I admire this book, and as trifling as most of the criticisms on it appear, I cannot help making one objection——That the author has given too gloomy a picture of life, and too bad a character of mankind, who, upon the whole, I am much inclined to believe are a much better set of beings than some moralists, from a partial view, think proper to represent them. Indeed this melancholy turn of thought runs through all of Dr. Young's writings, but in no where so much as in what he calls his "True Estimate of Human Life,"

Life," one of the most *sombre* pieces surely that ever a splenetic imagination drew.

I imagine you have seen the Life of Savage*, and Letters from Felicia to Charlotte. I am told, but I have not seen it, that Mr. Warburton has wrote something against the Pleasures of Imagination; it must surely be a strange rage of criticism, that would drive him to quarrel with one of the most beautiful, and as far as I can judge, the most unexceptionable poem in our language. What can he have said against it? I must not forget to ask you too whether you can satisfy my curiosity who was the author of a Vision inscribed to Mr. Pitt, on his translation of Virgil, which I was extremely pleased with.

I am very much obliged to the Bishop for his polite attention, and hope you have armed yourself with patience to wade through this fourth side. You are certainly in the right that I should have been pleased with such an agreeable sight as you describe your ball-room, and I would have divested myself of all national prejudices, to make a fair comparison between the pretty ladies of Oxfordshire and those of Kent, who really make a very charming appearance at a Canterbury assembly.

* This was Dr. Johnson's Life of Savage, then just published.

To my great grief we are going to lose one of our most celebrated beauties, Miss Bethia D'Aeth *, (I believe you know something of her) who is going entirely to leave this country, which will deprive me of some very happy hours in her company, and her of one of the most delightful situations in the world, which she quits with great regret. Indeed the softness of her temper, and the elegant turn of her mind and understanding, are much better suited to the poetical pleasures of Knolton Grove, than the hurrying diversions of a noisy town; she always put me in mind of that line of Narcissa—Soft melancholy, &c. &c. But I forget while talking on a subject that delights me, you have been tired an hour ago. Assure yourself, &c. &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Nov.* 15, 1744.

Indeed, dear Miss Carter, if you will persist in quoting Latin to me, I must insist upon

* Daughter of Sir Thomas D'Aeth, of Knolton, Bart. She was married first to Herbert Palmer, Esq. and secondly to Lieut. Col. Cornan. To this lady Mrs. Carter addressed the poem, written in this year, which begins "Say dear Bethia," &c.

it that you write your Letters in a larger hand; for as I am obliged to apply to the Bishop of Oxford before I can understand them, it is highly necessary they should be in some degree visible.

To be serious, I thank you for a most agreeable Letter, though the beginning of it gave me a good deal of pain to find you had been in such a melancholy way. By this time you feel the high joy of ease after pain, and peace after anxiety, the highest indeed human nature is capable of, except just when it is taking a flight to the stars, upon the wings of some sublime speculation, and I dare say before this time your goose is metamorphosed into an eagle, and has taken very many such ethereal journies, while I, poor mortal, alas for me! am chiefly conversant in the price of flax, and the different merits of my spinsters. At last, I can fly no further than plain English will help me (for as for French and Italian, they certainly do not raise one's speculations, though they vary them very agreeably,) but they rather serve to waft a butterfly over a gay parterre, than to assist even a lark in ascending; however, while Mr. Pascal is extant in French, this censure should rather be confined to the soft Italian.

Pour les Lettres de Madame de Sévigné, je trouve comme vous qu'il n'y a rien de plus agréable ni de plus interessant que cette tendresse maternelle dont

dont chaque feuille est remplie. Mais je trouve aussi qu'elle en faisit trop absolument le bonheur et le malheur de sa vie; que son attachement étoit trop vive pour un monde aussi passager que celui ci, que ses momens etoient trop occupés par des tendres souvenirs, et des regrets vains et inutiles, mais dans tout cela même il y a une beauté inimitable. Et ces gens si aimable et qui s'aimoient si parfaitement, ne trouvez vous pas que souvent ils passoient ensemble des heures très désagréables, qu'ils avoient de humeurs et des bisarreries. Je ne sais, Mademiselle, si celà vous frappe comme moi, je ny trouve rien de desavantageuse pour Madame de Sévigné ni sa fille; mais j'y trouve parfaitement dépeinte l'imperfection de toute societé humaine.

If I un onso, you will think me as gloomy as good D. Young; but let me vindicate myself by distinguishing between incomplete enjoyment and none at all, and between a reasonable and a splenetic iew of the world. If every body has a mixtue in their character, let it be acknowledged that a mixture implies good as well as bad, and that he best practical use of such kind of reflections is to enjoy the good cheerfully, that one may make the most of it, and slight whatever is disagreeable, as what is usual and to be expected.

I envy

I envy you the pleasure of reading Antonius in his own words; nobody ever made more reasonable observations than him. I know nothing of the vision you mention. As for Mr. Warburton's observations on that noble, that charming, that excellent poem, I am told they were on the least poetical part of it (that which concerns ridicule), and chiefly on the notes even of that, which he thought went upon a wrong principle of Lord Shaftesbury's, who surely (do not be angry with me) had some as wrong and dangerous as ever mingled their ill influence with a fine genius. I am, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Dec.* 5, 1744.

I PROMISE for the future, dear Miss Talbot, to be very good, and not to write in any language which you are resolved not to understand yourself; for the thoughts of your shewing my Letters to the Bishop of Oxford has frightened me out of my wits, and will be an effectual restraint to any display of my learning by way of quotations. However, if you had let me gone on quietly

quietly you would soon have seen to the end of it, for I have the faculty of forgetting one day what I read the last.

I was pleased to find you express so much regard for Marcus Antoninus, whom I always read with great delight, though I am sorry he had so wrong an idea of the Christian religion. I am now deeply engaged in an author that makes me half mad, Thucydides; however, I have begun and intend to persevere, if it is only to get over the difficulty of it, for the history does not give me half the pleasure I expected. One would think the man had been a heavy Lacedemonian, for there is really very little of the genius of a sprightly Athenian in it, but all seems laboured and constrained. You will certainly think me mightily set on the happiness of puzzling myself, when I tell you another of my employments is the doctrine of quadratic equations, which, with the addition of much cogitabundity over the riddles in the Ladies' Almanack, gives me an air of very profound study.

I was in hopes of making some progress in reading this winter, as I am likely to spend it where I do not meet with many interruptions, but I fear it will prove an impracticable scheme; for whatever inclination I may have to become more learned, I find I must content myself with remaining ignorant,

rant, or pay very severely for all the unsuccessful efforts I make to the contrary. What a mortifying consideration is it to the vanity of human understanding that its operations should be so entirely dependant on the fickle powers of mechanism. If I did not believe you too wise to need any such lesson, I should, from sad experience, caution you against the fatal error people are guilty of, who think it possible to improve their understanding while they neglect the care of their health. Those who set out on such a mad pursuit after knowledge, run themselves out of breath, and are stopped in the midst of their career, when a sober moderate pace might have carried them securely to their point. 'Tis after all very absurd to expect a watch should go well, when one has ruined the very springs on which its motion depends.—What a wilderness of metaphors am I rambling through.

As to Madame Sévigné, it must be confessed her fondness was carried rather too far, but this excess admits of some excuse. The natural turn of her temper does not seem to have met with any restraint from a regular education, and without some particular advantage it is extremely difficult for such very lively people to keep themselves in some instance or other from running mad. The very best dispositions of heart are no defence against this evil; for where the object is innocent, and the

affection itself carries a moral appearance, a quick imagination is too much engaged by the first pleasing view to look any further, or consider the ill effects that often arise from a too great attention to even the best particular attachments. This vivacity is scarcely to be corrected, unless by a very early habit of thinking, an advantage which very few have the happiness to possess.

I perfectly forgive you any censure on my Lord Shaftesbury, for one half of his works I never read, and the other half I have forgot; I just remember in general that I was greatly charmed with some things in the Moralist, and that in others he appeared a very sad reasoner. Have you ever seen a Hymn to Science, by the author of the Pleasures of Imagination?

I must tell you the mortal fright we have all lately been in here. One night, between nine and ten, a messenger came to the commanding officer of soldiers in this place, with advice that a considerable body of soldiers were landed at Walmer Castle (about a mile from Deal). The man was strictly examined, and there appeared no reason to doubt the truth of what he said. So the soldiers (about 70) were drawn out, and an alarm beat to call the townsmen to take their arms, which they did with great spirit. An express was then dispatched to a man of war in the Downs for further

assistance,

assistance, and a boat was filled with sailors well armed and ordered ashore. Never was such a scene of uproar and confusion; women and children squeaking through the streets, drums beating, bells ringing, signals flashing, and the guns from the ships and Deal Castle firing. Various were the accounts that every passenger brought, that the French had taken Walmer Castle, knocked down the village, killed and eat the inhabitants, &c. &c. &c. &c. Well, it was to be our turn next, and every body was in expectation every minute of seeing the cannibals enter the town: when, after about two hours fright, it appeared that the alarm had nothing in it.

The ground of all this alarm was two idle young fellows, who had got into Walmer Castle, (which, to the honour of several officers who have standing salaries, is guarded by two old women,) and making a strange noise with their sticks, frightened them; and their fears supplied all the rest; they ran into the village, declaring the French had got possession of the castle, and that they had seen 200 (supposed to be cows quietly grazing on a common.) Upon this the men took to their arms, the women ran away, and the above messenger was sent to Deal. To be sure the man thought he was doing something to his immortal glory by the manner in which I am told he proclaimed himself through Deal

streets—" I am John Redman, of Walmer, come to tell you the French are landed."

For my part, I must honestly confess I never was so terrified in my whole life; my fright, however, would have been less if I could have heard what my father said about it, but he was laid hold of by such a number of people to comfort their mothers, aunts, and grannies, that I could scarce get sight of him during the whole bustle. After this long story, I shall only say adieu, &c.

MISS TALBOT TO MRS. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Jan.* 6, 1745.

MANY happy returns of the new year to you, dear Miss Carter. I do not know how to vary the phrase genteelly, but as I cannot help framing a thousand good wishes for you, so I cannot omit this opportunity of expressing them to you.

And now (this terrible Bishop of Oxford, that you are so afraid of, not being standing at my elbow, but alas for us, a great many miles off,) I will lay your Letter open before me, and enter into conversation. As nothing keeps it up so well as a little

little spirit of contradiction, the first thing I think it proper to take notice of is what you say about Thucydides, whom, from this same conversible spirit, I find myself just now disposed to commend, though the truth is, when I heard him read this summer, he did not answer my expectations; yet it must certainly be allowed, that even when his thoughts are worded by Mr. Hobbes, there is a closeness and correctness in them that gives one a very high opinion of his judgment and veracity. He seems to me an author of great gravity and weight, one that one cannot but have a great respect for, and whom it seems more creditable to commend than authors of less plainness and more ornament. I own, however, I thought of him just what you do, and over and above, I am very much offended with him on behalf of all the Grecian ladies, of whom he does not think fit to mention one through his whole history; and indeed of all ladies in general, to whom he gives a very civil admonition in one of Pericles' speeches, to keep themselves in quiet, and make themselves as little talked of as possible. I wish you would give me a politer translation of this passage than Hobbes has done. I got some gentlemen to look into the Greek, and they brought me a wicked note out of the old scholiast that makes every thing ten times worse. He says, that modesty

is

is the only virtue that can belong to women, for they have neither prudence, justice, nor fortitude.

Well, in my poor opinion, who am so prudent that I would fain make Pericles and Thucydides speak civilly to me, and to do them justice, have courage enough to oppose the sentiment of this venerable pedant, the admonition has a much more delicate meaning, and a very just one. Gentleness and reserve are such becoming qualities, that it is perhaps no inconsiderable privilege of our sex to be placed amongst *fair Virtue's silent train.* The well-bred Pericles did not mean to say, Go mind your spinning and hold your tongues—but what he did mean to say I will leave it to you to tell me.

After Thucydides we read Herodotus. I was pleased with him beyond my expectation; he struck me more as an agreeable, good-humoured, chit-chat companion, than a formidable author, and the grave father of history. I do not know whether he was not the same kind of genius with Ariosto, only allowing for the superiority of Greece above Italy, and of what has truth for its foundation to mere romance. In Thucydides I had scarce met with one instance of heroic virtue. Poor Nicias was a good sort of man, but much like one of us in these later ages. If one could have been transported back all at once into ancient Athens, I fancy one should

should have been surprized to see men, women, and children look, move, and talk in the same kind of way that we do in England; 'tis the same kind of feel one has from reading these original authors. There is a kind of poetry in the imagination that dresses up distant times and people in a higher way than any reality can answer, and this is not a little helped out by reading the ancient histories of modern authors, who have all writ in the same ornamented way. Perhaps this observation is not a just one, and so I will have done with it. One word more about Thucydides, as his is the history of a civil war, in his own times, my English vanity could not help comparing it with my Lord Clarendon's, surely he is much beyond them all.

I run on without mercy, and do not consider that poor aching head of your's; I beg you will take for yourself the good advice you gave me, and do not sacrifice your health, either to riddles, Greek, or mathematics, as I am determined to preserve mine in spight of tent work, painting, and that strongest of all temptations, the poring over books by the fire side. I shall soon be got out of the reach of this temptation, for your next Letter will probably find me in London. In the mean time I advise you to lay aside all your abstruse studies, and read none but R. B.'s books, or the History of the seven Champions, or, what I have just finished,

Cassandra.

Cassandra. Or if you had rather aspire to the character of an author, pray write me some plain books that shall be just on a level with the capacity of my farmers and spinners, and weavers, and teach them useful sentiments in an amusing lively way. Seriously I think something in this way much wanting, and might be pretty, I fancy, if the author of Pamela would undertake it. Some of the Archbishop of Cambray's Fables are of this kind *.

When I came first into the country, I was all pastoral in my notions; I fancied that all shepherds could play on the flute and talk eclogues. Some years have set me right on this head, but I still wish those poor people to partake something more of the improvements of the mind than they do.

I am quite converted to Madame Sévigné, I do not know so charming a book. The Ode to Science I never saw. Your History of the Invasion of Deal by the French, in the year 1744, is a most incomparable story, most admirably told. Poor John Redman of Walmer! What a volume I have wrote, your's, &c.

* This idea has since been ably realized by one of her own sex, in Mrs. Hannah More's "Stories for Persons of the middle Rank," and her "Ballads." To lower herself to the level of the ignorant and uneducated, and employ all the powers of her strong and cultivated mind for the benefit of her fellow-creatures, regardless equally of fame and profit, deserves no common praise; but it will surely *have its reward.*

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *March* 2, 1745.

This town, my dear Miss Carter, makes me so perfectly idle, the very air of it is infected, and there is no resisting its influence; and to this alone must you attribute my long silence, nor should I have awoke out of my dream of indolence, had I not been told that Miss Peggy Carter* had been at my door (unfortunately while I was abroad) and it immediately occured to my vanity that you had sent her express to know whether I was dead or alive. Whether in the days of Mr. Bickerstaff I should not have been reckoned among the dead, is I think by no means clear. I am sure one lives to no one purpose of a rational being all those hours that are spent at the modern assemblies: yet to these all conversation is sacrificed; friendly visits, and private parties, are things gone out of the world; and Handel, once so crowded, plays to empty walls in that opera house where there used to be a constant *audience* as long as there were any dancers to be *seen*. Unfashionable that I am, I

* Sister to Mrs. Carter, and afterwards wife of the Rev. Dr. Pennington.

was

was I own highly delighted the other night at his last oratorio. 'Tis called Belshazzer, the story the taking of Babylon by Cyrus; and the music, in spight of all that very bad performers could do to spoil it, equal to any thing I ever heard. There is a chorus of Babylonians deriding Cyrus from their walls, that has the best expression of scornful laughter imaginable. Another of the Jews, where the name, Jehovah, is introduced first with a moment's silence, and then with a full swell of music so solemn, that I think it is the most striking lesson against common genteel swearing I ever met with.

You will think I am run mad, musically mad, if I go on any longer on the subject; but as it is rather more fashionable to run mad about Mr. Thomson's play, I will change my theme, and talk to you of Tancred. I want much to know how you like it, at this distance I would lay any wager you do not like it so well as your sister does, who certainly cannot be your sister, and not have been to see it long ago. Every body agrees that no play was ever so much improved in acting, at least not since the Booths and Bettertons *. That first scene especially,

* No wonder, for Garrick acted Tancred, and Mrs. Cibber, Sigismunda. Sheridan performed Siffredi. The play was brought out under the auspices of two celebrated statesmen, William Pitt, afterwards Earl of Chatham, and Sir George, after-

especially, where Siffredi discovers to Tancred who he is, pleased me almost beyond any thing I ever saw, indeed even before I saw it, that scene was my favourite. But what do you think of the story, and what of the style?

Have you seen Mr. Akenside's new Odes? they are all, I believe good, but especially that against Suspicion, and another upon Cheerfulness. There is a poem upon Sickness, that has some images and descriptions in it dreadfully bold and fine, and that to me give quite the promise of a genius. There is a book of Dialogues upon Education that I fancy you will be extremely pleased with. So much for books, it is but fair I think to mention the general character of those just published to one's friends at a distance; after all it is more likely you that dwell with leisure and the Muses, should be able to inform us trifling inhabitants of this silly London of all such matters, while our Letters to you should be filled with the newest accounts of fashion, accurate description of French hoops, Venetian caps, and all such important

afterwards Lord Lyttelton; they were both friends to Thomson, and attended the rehearsals of the play, assisting the actors with their instructions. Booth and Betterton had been dead some years before Garrick appeared upon the stage.

See Davies's Life of Garrick, in which the date is wrong.

matters,

matters, that might enable you to shine away in the very tip top of the fashion, at church or at the ball.

The first part of the time I was in town, somehow or other I led a grave home life, and had nothing to say to amuse; the last fortnight or three weeks, I have racketed about, like other people, and then I was as much put to it for time as I had been before for matter. At last I have got over all difficulties, and here is a tedious long Letter that will make you bless your stars that you have not received more of the same sort. That you may not be discouraged from writing to me again, I will promise you that the next shall be in every respect better. It shall come within a due time after I have received your's, it shall be as facetious as the books of conundrums, it shall be filled with news or politics, or whatever you will give me a hint that you have a mind to hear, and shall only resemble this in the last line, which assures my dear Miss Carter in every one with equal truth how much I am, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *April* 26, 1745.

I by no means, my dear Miss Talbot, admit your being asleep as a sufficient reason for my being mortified by your silence; your dreams would have more charms for me, than many other peoples waking thoughts; but you don't love speeches, so I must have done.

You ask me my opinion of Tancred: I had rather you had told me your's, as a sure guide to form my judgment by, which would have prevented my delivering any blundering opinion of my own. I have really so much pleasure in the beauties of Mr. Thomson's writings, and so great a veneration for the morality of them, that it hurts me to find any faults; but yet I cannot help thinking that all the characters in this play (except Osmond's) are unnatural and inconsistent. Was there ever an instance of a man of common sense, who from a sincere thoughtful love of virtue, could so shockingly break through all its plainest and most important obligations? Is Tancred's behaviour, however the poet may endeavour to account for it, consistent with a very quick temper, a nice sense of honour, or a heart violently in love? On the contrary,

trary, is not one extremely surprized to find Sigismunda with all that softness and dejection so hastily resolve to marry Osmond? However, in spite of all these objections, I am extremely charmed with several parts of the play. The description of the King of Sicily's death, not to mention a hundred other things, is extremely beautiful, and the conclusion a most excellent lesson.

I have read one book on Sickness, and am entirely of your opinion about it, I could not help wishing however, that in the place of Chrysostom and Jerome, the author had mentioned Dr. Clarke or some other moderns, who I cannot help thinking do much more honour to the Christian religion, and were much better preachers than the venerable declaimers of more early ages. You tell me nothing of the Epistle to Curio, was not you greatly pleased with it? I have not seen the Odes nor the Dialogues on Education, a subject which I should be glad to find better and more fully treated on than I have yet met with. But I am afraid the most excellent instructions that could be given on this head would be but of little use, as there are so few people who have courage enough so far to get over the prejudices of custom, the false maxims of the world, and their own affections, as to follow them.

But to return from this digression to books and authors, I must tell you the celebrated Mr. Paul White-

Whitehead has been at Deal with a family where I often visit; it was my fate to be once in his company, much against my will, for having naturally as strong an antipathy to a wit, as some people have to a cat, I at first fairly run away to avoid it; however, I was dragged in at last, and condemned by my perverse fortune, to hear part of a satyre ready for the press *. Considered as poetry and wit it had some extremely fine strokes, but the vile practice of exalting some characters and abusing others, without any color of truth or justice, has something so shocking in it, that the finest genius in the world cannot, I think, take from the horror, and I had much ado to sit with any kind of patience to hear it out; surely there is nothing more provoking than to see fine talents thus abused, and wretchedly misapplied.

I congratulate you on the extreme pleasure you take in painting, in which I am persuaded you must excel. I have lately taken great pains to acquire some little notion of this delightful art, but with such wretched success that I begin to lose all courage. I never had any kind of instruction but from two or three books, as utterly unintelligible to me as if they were writ in the Calmuck language. In short I have nothing to assist me, but industry

* "Honour, a Satyre," published soon after, in this year.

and a strong inclination, for genius I have none, and I want mightily to know whether one can make any progress without it, not that I expect you, dear Miss Talbot, to inform me, for it is a circumstance of which you can have no idea. It would be a great pleasure to me to hear sometimes what work you are engaged in, and what sort of painting you are most fond of. I am, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *June* 18, 1745.

You must know, dear Miss Carter, I began a long Letter to you three weeks ago; but probably you do know it; for I imagine some fairy conveyed it to Deal, unsealed, and unfinished; thinking it long enough without the additions I intended, the certain fact is, that it is vanished and gone out of my drawer, however I will attempt another in its stead, and if it does not meet with the same fate, the date of it will inform you that your next must be directed to Oxfordshire. For the last fortnight or somewhat more, I have inhabited such poetical shades, that if I had had the least genius for description, I ought above all things to

to have writ to you from thence. To be sure you must often have heard Mr. Wright talk in high strains of Wrest Gardens *, and if you were acquainted with the possessor of them I should not need many words to persuade you how happy I was there. While people are in a state of enchantment they are not used to be good for much, and therefore you will not wonder if I indulged myself in perfect idleness, and left all my correspondents to amuse themselves, with their own speculations, perfectly uninterrupted by any line from me.

Being now returned to my quiet home, where I am probably fixed for seven months to come, it is time to pay some court to those upon whose Letters I must chiefly depend for amusement in the dead time of the year. At present every bird is a companion, every field a gay place; but summer, alas! has wings, and these gay fields will be as bleak before I leave them, as they were when I last parted from them——One would think I was desiring you not to write to me again till you did it to wish me a merry Christmas, but upon my word it is the mere love of talking, and nothing else that

* Wrest, in Bedfordshire, for many ages the seat of the noble and venerable family of Grey. It now belongs to Amabel, Baroness Lucas, great grandaughter to Henry, Duke of Kent, the last male heir of that branch of the family.

has hurried me into this strange digression upon summer and winter, so pray do not mistake me—

I think it is a maxim of true philosophy, that we should not root out our natural inclinations, but only try to improve them to the best purposes. Since I have this fit of talking upon me, I will e'en harangue upon painting and drawing, which you in great humility desired me to do; what a degree of humility that is of your's, to imagine I can give you any information about it, you would quickly perceive, if any of my capital drawings were small enough to go into a Letter, for indeed they make so poor a figure, that I never see any of them hung up but it puts me out of humour. I learn of a good master, but am much too impatient, and too volatile to give half the time and application that are necessary to make any thing tolerable, yet I undertake large pictures, like an inconsiderate goose as I am, and then have the mortification to leave them unfinished. This is actually my case with a fine holy family of Carlo Maratti's, which I began last winter (and two or three other pictures at the same time) in crayons, and which must now want the perfecting touches till February or March. At the same time I had undertaken to learn perspective of Mr. Wright. I hope from all these things I shall in time learn discretion at least,

and

and not to be thus perpetually aiming de prendre la lune avec les dents.

Well now for what you ask me about drawing. If you would be a good painter, drawing in black and white must be your principal attention for some years: and in drawing you must attend not so much to the finishing and shading as to the exactness and spirit of the outline. For this you must copy from the best prints of the best masters, and the simpler the figures you begin with the better. Raphael's bible is my passion at present, but for that you must consult your own taste, since nobody ever does a drawing well that they are not pleased with. Only beware of French and Dutch painters, and begin with figures rather than landscapes, and rather do nothing at all, than any thing from a bad original. A pen and ink or Indian ink is much preferable to a bad pencil. Goupy made me begin with a pen and ink, because as those faults cannot be easily effaced it naturally makes one more careful. When I speak against copying landscapes from prints, I don't mean to say any thing of taking sketches from nature, which is a different art and a very pretty one to be sure.

My own greatest amusement in painting, is doing flowers from the life in water colours, there is always some elegance in these imitations of nature, and originals of this sort have a spirit very different

from any copy one could make from a painted flower piece: besides it is a great improvement to one both in drawing and colouring, and has no difficulty or tediousness *.

Thanks for your recommending me l'Eloge de la Folie; some time ago, I met with it at Wrest, and was highly diverted both with the book, and Holben's cuts, which are surely excellent in their kind, and furnished us many a laugh. Adieu! &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *July* 29, 1745.

It is your own fault, dear Miss Carter, if you are surprized with a second Letter before my last is answered, though I own I deserve it; but I think you so naturally kind, that I begin to fear it is illness, and not malice or indolence that has kept you silent so long; or perhaps as the subject of my Letter was painting, you intend to answer it in hieroglyphic, and stay to delineate and colour a page or two of ingenious rebuses.—Or who

* The editor is in possession of several pieces of this kind, done by Miss Talbot, with great spirit and elegance. He has also a landskip in water colours by her, which is much admired.

knows

knows after all, but the French may have made a descent and run away with you to supply their want of a Madame Dacier; well then you will be a still more amusing correspondent than ever, therefore pray do not drop me, but let me know what is the state of bel esprit at Paris, I am sure we have very little of it in England. Not a new book has shewed its head this century; but the comfort is, old ones will bear reading over very often, and in truth I think there is full as much pleasure in reading a very excellent book the fifth or sixth time, as if one had it fresh from the press. One's curiosity is too eager and hasty at first, but afterwards one is at leisure to dwell upon the beauties, one has a general idea of the whole, and can stop at what particular part one pleases. Nay one has a joy of a peculiar kind, in life one is unwilling to part with an agreeable moment because one knows it will never come again,

"Relentless time no mortal power
Can stop, or stay his flying speed,
Swifter than thought he runs, he flies,
The present hour for ever dies."

but in books one can almost do this, and by turning back to a fine passage recall the pleasure of the first moment when one will.

I am experiencing this in Milton and Dante. Indeed the last, as it is but my second time of reading

reading him, I am by no means mistress of yet; I can see amazing strokes of beauty in several passages, but the whole I have as yet no comprehension of. If you are fond of drawing plans, I wish you would send me a sketch of his Seven Circles of Inferno. For our family book we are reading Dion Cassius translated from Xiphilin *; it is surely a great pity we have no better translations of most of the Greek historians; we lately read one of Arrian's life of Alexander, which was full of faults, and yet with all that disadvantage an admirable book, but few clever people will deign to employ themselves in making translations, and if they would favour the world with making originals one would never complain of them; but to be absolutely idle is not at all allowable, and yet so is most part of the world at present. Our armies are idle abroad, our young people are idle at the universities, our presses are idle for want of idle books to employ them, and I out of mere idleness am tresspassing on your time, which it is possible you might employ just as idly without this Letter as with it, so I will make no apologies, but only add, &c.

* That is, from Xiphilin's abridgment of him.

Mrs.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Aug.* 1, 1745.

I WISH I had been so lucky, dear Miss Talbot, as to be acquainted with some such sprightly intelligence as you mention, that might have conveyed your Letter to me, and saved me a great deal of impatience; for alas, I did not discover, even by an impulse, that you intended me any such favour; but remember the Letter is absolutely mine, and to be restored to me should it ever again find its way into the drawer, though 'tis to be feared it stands but a very bad chance, unless the sylph who stole it cannot read.

I am set down to write to you at Canterbury, for the very reason you would not write to me in Bedfordshire, viz. that I am extremely happy, and 'tis no doubt of vast importance to you to know it. Whatever poetical shades or enchanting company you might meet with, you would not feel more pleasure than I do in a place, and set of acquaintance, where I always spend the most agreeable hours of my life. I have been for two months the gayest of all mortals without any assistance from public diversions; though I am surrounded by plays and assemblies, I have not seen one. For the punish-

ment

ment of my iniquities I was once drawn in at a ———, what shall I call it? a drum, a rout, a racket, a hurricane, an uproar, a something, in short, that was the utter confusion of all sense and meaning, where every charm in conversation was drove away by that foe to human society whist; in a word, where I was kept up muzzing and half dead with sleep and vexation till one in the morning, and from that time made a resolution, in whatever company I met a pack of cards, to *fly from it as from the face of a serpent.* I have often borne such a situation with better temper among people I was more indifferent to, but it was beyond all mortal sufferance to see such a change in those whom I knew to be capable of the most enlivening entertainment; for they positively looked as stupid as dormice, and whenever they did speak, it was in a language utterly unintelligible. If you have not so great an aversion to cards as I have, 'tis impossible for you to comprehend the force of my calamity.

I should have been extremely obliged to you if you had executed your intention of sending me a drawing; whether it had been well or ill done I should neither have known or cared, as its greatest value to me would have been that it came from you. I am much obliged for the instructions you so kindly sent me about drawing, though I fear they will be of little use, as I am in reality, what I believe

I believe you only to be in description, too volatile and impatient to apply myself long enough to any one thing to make any tolerable proficiency in it. My present reigning scheme is music. Having for some time past made a composition of noises between the hissing of a snake and the lowing of a cow, upon a German flute, I am now set down to a spinnet, which unfortunately stood in my way, and before I can play three bars in one tune, am trying at a dozen, by which means I shall never finish any. I have often lamented this restless dissipation of thought that still sends me rambling after some new pursuit; but as all my endeavours to prevent it are ineffectual, I content myself with thinking it is a superficial world one lives in, and superficial understandings suit it best; so vive la bagatelle, I'll e'en trifle on and be contented.

You need not have made any apology for your digressions on summer and winter, for nobody thinks or feels more about summer and winter than I do. 'Tis not to be told how I have enjoyed this fair season of roses and jessamines and flowering limes, though not without some sorrowful reflections on my folly for coming to Canterbury at a time when I might be extremely happy without it, and think of returning to spend a long winter listening to the winds and waves at Deal.

I have

I have heard nothing from Mr. Wright for time immemorial, so belike he may be taking a trip to the moon. Adieu. I am in a violent hurry (not to go after him but) to dress for a horse-race and an assembly. This Letter has been begun a month, it is time therefore I should say, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Aug.* 8, 1743.

DEAR MISS TALBOT,

NOTWITHSTANDING all the shame and confusion I felt at reading your Letter, it gave me so much pleasure that I can hardly repent of my unjustifiable behaviour that occasioned it. I believe before this you have had proof that I am neither dead, nor run away with by the French, though how soon the last may happen I know not, for never do I remember any time when there was so much appearance of it.

I perfectly agree with you in the pleasure there is in reading an excellent book the fifth or sixth time. It is a great consolation to me to find you are not a perfect mistress of Dante, for I was greatly mortified in looking over it last summer to perceive

perceive it so much beyond my comprehension, whereas I now think it very marvellous I could make out a single line. I have just begun a book which no doubt you have long since read, Dr. Rutherforth's Essay on Virtue. I am very well pleased with his notions as far as I have read and can understand them, but there seems to be such an obscurity in his language that I am often puzzled to make out the construction. I hope my intellects will clear up a little as I get better acquainted with his style. As to Xiphilin, I never saw nor heard of such a name, though I honour the look of it extremely as it seems to be Greek *.

After all the instances I have already given, I must tell you that pour surcroit d'ignorance I have received a Letter from Mr. Wright, of which I do not understand a word. To excuse my own dullness, I am apt to believe the poor man's head is turned, as he seems to insinuate he has lately fallen in love, which, as I have read in several books, is very apt to turn people's heads. Be this as it will, I know not what to make of his Letter, only that upon the whole, it was charitably intended for my reformation; but this I need in so many instances

* *Modern* Greek, which accounts for Mrs. Carter's ignorance of the name. See a short account of him in the Biog. Dict.

that

that 'tis impossible to find out what folks mean when they talk in general. I have wrote to him in great haste for an exact catalogue of my errors, and have borrowed a larum against it comes, that it may wake me every morn at five o'clock, that I may endeavour to amend them.

I am half dead with the head-ach, and cannot make up the sum of my nonsense in prose, so you shall have it ready wrote in verse. Dr. Walwyn, to whom this house belongs, talks of cutting down a set of trees that form a very pretty romantic gloom, because they prevent the ripening of the fruit, which has been a source of great affliction to Miss Hall and me; and to please her what I have enclosed was wrote*. I must not conclude without telling you, what seems very strange, that in every other respect, saving the article of cutting down trees, the Doctor is as worthy a man as I know. I am, &c.

* See the poem, p. 389, quarto edition. The trees however were not spared.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Sept.* 4, 1745.

DEAR MISS CARTER,

Let insipid people wait; there are Letters which I have owed longer than this, but none that I have so much inclination to answer as your's; and why should poor inclination be always crossed and snubbed? In many an instance it must, and must is unanswerable, but for once I am determined to follow its dictates. I hope Dr. Walwyn will not take up the same resolution, and follow his own inclinations against advice so elegantly given. I am quite interested in the fate of your favourite trees, but cannot find in my heart to be sorry they were threatened. Alas, if they had not been in danger, I should never have known they had been in being. I have no great idea of the charm there is in the word property, except when I am trembling for some shady elms that are the property of a neighbouring squire. I used really to think that it was very good of my neighbours to take all the pains of cultivating their lands to make me a flourishing prospect, and never had any notion that a meadow would look a bit the greener for my being able to call it my own. But when the sacri-

legious axes come abroad, I wish I could call the whole country mine.

How extremely kind it was of you to begin a Correspondence that gives me so much pleasure; but what a pity it is now we are so much better acquainted, that we can never meet. The best comfort under that misfortune is, that we both like the places we are in, and can imagine one another very happy, you amid the gaieties of Canterbury, and I in the dolce ozio of Cuddesden. However, if fortune should ever bring us both to London at the same time, I should think myself highly obliged to her, and should flatter myself with the hopes of some agreeable afternoons more rationally spent than at a drum. And so, poor soul, you have no genius for a drum—but you have for a horse-race, it seems, and in favour of that I forgive you. Do not ask me whether I have an aversion to cards*. As the business of life and the bane of conversation I have, but in all mixed company I reverence them; and there is another sort of company where I really love them, and that is among a good-humoured set of people that are merry without being conversible. I am a

* Later in life, however, Mrs. Carter *herself* was a convert to cards, and played whist in the evening, in a quiet and moderate way, with great satisfaction.

strange sort of mortal, but there is no amusement, no employment, no way of life, that has not charms for me at one time or other. I have a great notion that half one's business in this world is to make the best of every thing, and keep one's self in constant good-humour. I love society extremely, from the fine folks in town, down to the dirty children in a village school, or day-labourers with their hooks and scythes. I love solitude to excess—I love walking because it is cheerful, and sitting still at home because it is safe and quiet. In short, one may find some reason, good or bad, for liking every thing that is thrown in one's way. I am sure I should like your performance in music of all things, for I have an ear just suited to such harmony as you describe, and could (excuse my vanity) accompany your flute or harpsichord with my voice, which in singing is something between the hooting of an owl and the chirping of a cricket, with now and then a note of the peacock.

Adieu. As a specimen of my idleness, I send you a rose, which you may see I have taken no great pains about, and yet quite as much as I ever do. I hope this will find you at Canterbury, because I fancy a little idleness and gaiety is much better for your head-aches than too much retirement and constant study. Pray take care of yourself, for I have promised to introduce you to some dear

friends

friends of mine if ever we meet in London, and if ——The bell, very luckily for you, rings for church, and I cannot finish my sentence or add any more than I am, &c. &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Sept.* 20, 1745.

I am very much obliged to you, my dear Miss Talbot, for your very pretty rose; it has, I assure you, bloomed, and made a very beautiful appearance in the desart I have been travelling over; in the midst of my perplexities I have stopt to look and admire it. I am still more obliged to you for your Letters, as they are the best guides I could meet with to bring me into a right path, if I have grace enough to follow their directions, which I hope I shall, though at present, such is the present state of things, I must visit you in sack-cloth and ashes, as the habit best suited to the now disposition of my mind. Indeed one would not imagine it, from the lively colours in which I appear to every body else; but this is an uneasy restraint, and I must presume upon your good-nature, and the confession you have sometimes made me of being

being in the same dolorous way, to indulge myself for one half hour in throwing it off. To look gay when one is really unhappy is a difficult piece of dissimulation; however, it is a duty society has a right to demand, and may be rendered practicable when one thinks it a virtue. Nothing else surely can do it. Why you should not enjoy the benefit of this virtue as well as other folks, I cannot tell, unless it be that I have a higher opinion of you than of any body else, and therefore chuse to appear before you without any disguise.

I do not know I was ever so perfectly out of humour with the world, and all in it, as I am at present; a very unpleasant reverse of my usual error in liking it perhaps better than it deserves. Every thing now looks joyless and uncomfortable. There is neither light in the sun, nor verdure in the fields, nor cheerfulness in any human face. I am sick of people of sense because they can act like fools, and of fools because they cannot talk like people of sense, and of myself for being so absurd as to trouble my head about them. There is a strange kind of magic in some circumstances that can thus alter the whole face of things. A little while ago I was mightily disposed to be pleased with all I met with, and now, from the same principle, I am pleased with nothing. 'Tis surely a fatal error to give one's self up to certain enchant-

ments that lead the mind into fairy regions of dreams and shadows, where it is amused and fixed on imaginary forms of happiness and perfection, which vanish with the fickle cause that gave them being, and one is left in the midst of a wild perplexed solitude, astonished, and utterly at a loss what road to take, or where to meet with any object to divert it.

I certainly ought to be ashamed to think from this description, my dear Miss Talbot, what a figure I must appear to you. I really am ashamed but not sorry, as I find it begins to do me a great deal of good: the picture I have been drawing of myself is so deformed and sombre that it quite shocks me. Surely conversing with you has a wonderful power of harmonizing my thoughts, for I find myself getting into good temper apace; me voici donc passablement gai, le monde se repeuple, et tout va assez bien. I'll e'en put on my Venetian cap, stick a great sun-flower in my bosom, look very fine, laugh, and be as well pleased with people and things as I used to be.

Do you know any thing about a scheme for a library by one Mr. Fancourt? An odd looking kind of man called here this morning, and a servant brought me word there was an undertaker wanted to speak to me: now as in the midst of all my sorrows I did not remember I had given any orders for a coffin,

the thing somewhat smote me, but I was soon undeceived, and found the man had only an innocent design of flattering me out of a guinea, which however I had fortitude enough to resist. I do not at all comprehend the scheme, but he tells me you approve it; and if you do, 'tis ten to one whether I do withstand.

I am still at Canterbury, and do not know positively when I shall leave it. You certainly think I make visits in the true patriarchal way, and sojourn with folks for seven years. I am half mad to know the conclusion of a sentence in your last Letter; it was very cruel of you to leave me puzzling myself with a carry witchet. I have a hundred more things to say but am called to go out, so must say adieu! &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Because you are in low spirits, dear Miss Carter, and I am not in very high ones, I think I can scarce do a better thing than to write to you. I have felt a great deal of what you express; as Durfé says, "J'ai passé par ce detour là, et je sais bien de quel pied on y marche," upon

the destruction of my cloud built castles and their airy inhabitants, I have fancied myself as you do, left in a dreary solitude, and said with Anthony,

> "My torch is out, and the world lies before me,
> Like a black desart at the approach of night."

But with the help of some experience, much reflection, a little common sense, and a few plain books, I am grown in a happier state of mind, and I think much better suited to this world. As well might we expect

> Perpetual sunshine and unclouded skies,
> As man for ever temperate, just, and wise.

I don't know whether you ever met the Sermons of the Archbishop of Cambrai*. I took up a volume lately, and was charmed with some sentiments upon friendship, indeed I never read any thing that pleased me more than those sentences, though the book itself has many strange things in it, and to be sure no book of a papist upon religion can be without innumerable absurdities. But sure there never was a more amiable turn of mind than this man's; I will quote two or three sentences,

* Probably the amiable and virtuous Fenelon; though in the list of his works in the Biographical Dictionary no Sermons are mentioned.

though

though one spoils things strangely by disjointing them.

" Quand nous aimons les hommes hors de Dieu, nous les aimons pour nous mêmes— si ce n'est pas l'argent, la faveur que nous y cherchons, c'est la gloire de les aimer sans interêt, c'est le gout c'est la confiance, c'est le plaisir, d'être aimé par des gens de merite, qui flatte nôtre amour propre——

" Quel est donc le moïen d'aimer ses amis ? c'est de les aimer dans l'ordre de Dieu—c'est d'aimer en eux ce qu'il y amis, et de supporter pour l'amour de lui la privation de ce qu'il n'y met pas—L'amour propre, impatient, delicat, jaloux, se defie sans cesse de soi, et de son ami, il se lasse, il se dégoute, il trouve par tout de mecomptes: il voudroit toujours le parfait, et jamais il ne le trouve —Celui qui n'attend la perfection d'aucune créature n'est jamais mécompté en rien. Il aime Dieu, et ses dons en chaque créature suivant le dégré de bonté de chacun. Il aime moins ce qui est moins bon, il aime mieux ce qui est meilleur, il aime tout, par ce qu'il n'y a rien qui n'ait quelque petit bien, qui est le don de Dieu, et que les plus méchans tandis qu'ils sont encore en cette vie peuvent toujours devenir bons."

But I will have done with my quotations, for this is just like coming to see you, and giving up the whole conversation to some third person, for which

which I confess I have not taciturnity enough. Is it then really any thing new to you, that people of sense should act with prudence? I do not pity you for having experienced this truth, because the homeliest truth is better worth having than the most blooming error; and I believe those live happiest who take the world as they find it, and see it as it is, than those who make a fine fairy world of their own all of Dresden china, and peopled with sylphs. There is such a mixture of folly and infirmity in the best and wisest of the human race, that we should be much more thankful for the good we meet with, than disappointed at the bad. But the misfortune is, that instead of submitting patiently to the infirmities and faults of human nature, we are apt to lay all the blame upon particular people.

Do not think however, that I am at all inclined to that wretched set of writers who try to represent human nature as utterly base and contemptible; on the contrary, I have the highest notions of those noble improvements it is very capable of, only I see strongly its great fallibility, and that perfection in any kind is not to be looked for here. In youth we are apt to form too beautiful ideas; every thing in this world, even the highest merit we can meet with in it, deserves to be treated with some degree of indifference. There is a moderation to be observed even in our justest sentiments, our tenderest

attachments

attachments and most laudable pursuits. But our minds, most evidently made for a state of mediocrity, are strangely apt to run into extremes. You will meet with a thousand people who have no notion of any intermediate step between imagining all excellence in a character, and an absolute annihilation of it upon the first fault. This occasions perpetually what I think gives the most painful feeling, that strange contradictory way in which characters of remarkable people are bandied about the world.

Some commend Addison for his learning, his style, his moral character: another refers you to Mr. Pope's Atticus for his vanity, his pride, and self-love: very well, Mr. Addison had human frailties, and so had Mr. Pope, but why are not they compatible with great and real virtues in both; why may not we admire them, and many more characters of much greater mixture, as amiable, and excellent men, without any indignation at them for not being angels!

I have run into this long dissertation upon human nature, to induce you I believe to be reconciled to some human frailties of my own: you must know I am easily caught with a plausible story, love civil speeches to my heart, and run myself into perpetual scrapes and perplexities for want of fortitude, which you exerted very properly, in refusing

fusing poor Mr. Fancourt's wild scheme. While he was talking it over to me, I was unhappily too civil to find out the absurdity of it, (for I believe it is but a silly one, though I know two or three sensible people who have subscribed.) I did not indeed promise to subscribe, but I gave him hopes that if it was generally approved of I would—In short that disagreeable word NO, can never find its way out of my mouth, without so many circumlocutions that it is often mistaken for yes.

I have left no room for the subject one's heart and head is most full of at present, but talking it over and over serves to very little other purpose than to make one quite giddy; we are in the hands of Providence, and though we are bad enough ourselves, our cause is the noblest in the world. If you have any news on your coast pray send it me, God forbid you should have any from France; I wish from my soul you was further removed from the sea side. Your's, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Nov.* 5, 1745.

'Tis not to be told, dear Miss Talbot, what twitches and convulsions of mind I have felt every

every time that I have recollected how long your Letter has lain unanswered. I really have been hurried out of life with returning innumerable visits made to Mrs. Hall in changing houses, my head has been turned round like a whirligig, and is filled with nothing but bits, and ends, and fragments, hurled round in such quick rotation that I cannot lay hold on any one. Well, now I hope to have one half hour to myself, for all the world are going to see the Latin play, and I for an odd superstitious reason stay at home. And now I am talking about Latin plays, I want prodigiously to know whether you admire Terence. I cannot for the life of me find that merit in him which most people do, et sauf la reverence due aux anciens, I think Colley Cibber a much more moral and entertaining writer. I should not dare to utter this opinion in the precincts of the King's school, for fear of being thought to have ni Dieu, ni foi, ni loi, but I trust you with the depravity of my taste in hopes you will use some arguments in favour of Terence to set me right.

Well, I am returned to finish my visit to you, which was interrupted last night by my being called away to go to the assembly, where I was highly entertained with two partners. The first indeed had no great variety in him, for he was a most complete piece of solemn dullness. I believe he liked

liked me worse than I did him, for with great composure he walked off and left me to shift for myself without signifying his intentions: I believe he went to sleep in another room, for I heard a great snoring. To compensate for this profound wisdom, my good fortune next provided me with a prodigious wit, who made extempore rhimes on every man, woman, chair, and candlestick in the room. He was one of the oddest fellows I ever saw, with a strange kind of a foolish cunning look, and in all his gestures extremely like a *pierrot*. I am told he really has a great deal of wit, 'tis however certain he so far condescended to my capacity, as to talk nothing but nonsense, and I amply repaid his civility by being as nonsensical as he, so we parted with very high notions of each other's understanding.

I have a great respect for the Archbishop of Cambrai, but I was very angry with him for taking up so much of your Letter. Your own observations on the same subject are capable of doing me a great deal more good, as I believe you understand it much better. I could never find any great conviction in the arguments of those retired writers, who shut themselves up in a study, where they live in a state of perfect apathy, and frame fine eloquent directions to cure people of vexations which they themselves never felt. Nothing but conversing

versing with the world can give the very best understandings proper notions of it, or supply them with proper and affecting arguments to give those notions to others. Your observations on the judgments we ought to form of others are perfectly natural, and I entirely agree to them. I am pretty well cured of the fit of extravagance I was in when I wrote last, and I take all imaginable care not to relapse; we certainly ought to be particularly cautious not to let disappointments get the better of that habitual calmness of mind, which I believe to be one of the most essential parts of religion.

I can send you no news from the coast to be depended on. Some accounts there are of transports and men of war at Dunkirk, others that the French are to land in open boats some dark night, to escape the observation of the fleet. There is certainly much to be dreaded, but one runs the hazard of being laughed at in this county, for even supposing an invasion possible; there is such a security in every body one meets with here, as is surprizing.

I am still at Canterbury, I wonder Mrs. and Miss Hall are not tired of me, but that is their affair, and not mine, for I am very happy.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Dec.* 5, 1745.

I must give you a little account, my dear Miss Talbot, of our great topic of conversation here, though possibly you know more about it than I do.

Two gentlemen and a messenger came in post chaises to Deal on Thursday; they went first on board the Admiral, and then all the other ships in the Downs, where the prisoners of note were dispersed. They returned on shore about eight at night, and in two hours dispatched back the messenger to London. On Friday they went on board the Admiral again, in whose ship was Mr. Radcliffe and his pretended son. On Saturday they went to Dover Castle to look over the seamen of the Soleil, about forty in number. All this time a remarkable secrecy and mysteriousness were carried on. On Sunday arrived two horse guards, and demanded billets for fourteen more just coming. Soon after came a coach and six with two gentlemen in it, and the messenger. An express came in Sunday night at nine, and immediately another was returned to fetch more guards, and fourteen more came on Monday. All this apparatus and

affected

affected reserve made our suspicions greatly increase, that young Radcliffe was the young Pretender. It blew hard yesterday, but boats at last went off, and with some hazard brought seven of the prisoners ashore: they were received by the soldiers under arms, and as it was past nine o'clock, it was agreed to keep them at Deal all night. The person suspected seems not above twenty years old, has fair hair, inclining to yellow, is fair and ruddy, short waisted, long chinned, six foot high, and appears dejected.

Thus far my account from Deal. The prisoners went through Canterbury this morning; I was in the room with them, and saw them very particularly. The young man who calls himself Mr. Radcliffe came first into the room, and looked with an air of authority upon the rest, and, without taking any notice of his pretended father, placed himself immediately by the fire; he looked extremely dejected, is fair, and has the look of a Polander; he is very tall, and looks extremely awkward and boyish in his make. His whole person was as unlike as it was possible to Mr. Radcliffe's. One of the other prisoners called himself Captain Macdonald, and has the most effronterie I ever saw in a countenance, and looks moreover as if he could eat up men, women, and children.

The

The mob made a great huzzaing for King George, but no insult was offered the prisoner. The Post is going out; I have been in a hurry all day with this uproar, so must finish, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Dec.* 11, 1745.

The day after I had received your last Letter, dear Miss Carter, I sat down in all haste of gratitude to thank you for it, but about that time reports of the rebels being in full march towards London, put me into such a panic, and filled me with such terrible ideas, that I had not strength to go on. At present by the Duke's * surprizing diligence they seem utterly disappointed of their aim, and by the last accounts appear wearied, irresolute, and cast down. If it be so, poor unhappy people, one need not be in any immediate alarm about them, but indeed at that time I apprehended every thing from their desperation. And a bold push has sometimes been so terribly successful, that

* The Duke of Cumberland.

one

one knew not what might be the consequences of their approaching London. I find upon this occasion people there have shewn and exerted a most excellent spirit, and though they had all possible caution, had very little fear. If the French should attempt any thing at this time, that English spirit would surely be redoubled. May you never see any of them in your part of the island but as prisoners; I am much obliged to you for the description of those you saw lately: nobody at London as yet says any thing about them, but surely there seems great appearance of that poor young man being what he was suspected.

Was there not something vastly awkward and painful in this visit? As it must be grievous to them to be looked at in such a way, so I dare say, as much as your curiosity was gratified, it gave you some uneasiness for their sakes, since the moment an enemy is in our power, resentment and indignation end at once. Only indeed the gentle Captain Macdonald seemed to inspire you with no sort of compassion.

When I thank you for your last Letter, I must not forget to say how much obliged I was by the one that came before, which gave me twice the diversion that the ball did you, since I was as highly pleased with your silent partner, as I was with your talkative one. In this country place we meet

meet with nothing but mere simplicity, which has nothing burlesque in it, so that unless it be by some such sketch as those inimitable ones of your's, my face is scarce ever discomposed into a laugh from one week's end to another. I say this as an excuse for my writing insipid Letters. I can only send you over and over again the praises of tranquillity and leisure, and indeed we have peculiar reason to expatiate on that here, for I believe there is scarce a spot in the whole kingdom so absolutely quiet and unmolested at this time. No drums alarm our woods, our farmers pursue their harmless labour without interruption, our herds graze as yet untainted by sickness, and all around us looks as if the island was in a perfect state of peace and tranquillity.

I hope you read all the pamphlets that come out now with indefatigable industry. If not, at least let me recommend the Occasional Writer, (in answer to the second Declaration) for I have been exceedingly pleased with it. I have been much interested now too in the History of the Revolution in Tindall's Continuation of Rapin, and the subsequent affairs of Ireland, which are something vastly striking at this juncture.

Dear Miss Carter, adieu! I am not in a humour to day for writing a long Letter, without making it very dull, but I am determined I will wait no

longer

longer before I send you this, that I may entitle myself to an answer, and assure you that I am with the greatest sincerity, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Dec.* 24, 1745.

If you are not, dear Miss Talbot, as solicitous about news at this time as I am, you will think me very impertinent to trouble you so often on that subject. But I am strongly persuaded you must have a great deal of curiosity, and therefore I cannot deny myself the pleasure of informing you what passes in our part of the world.

I must tell you of the gallant expedition of the Dover privateers; while they were engaging the transports, a French privateer of ten carriage guns came from Calais to defend and assist the man of war. Captain Grosvenor, in the York, engaged it, and after three or four broadsides took it; the Captain, Lieutenant, and several of the men were killed. The other two privateers were then obliged to depart in order to secure their prizes, and Captain Grosvenor was then left alone to cope with the French man of war. He fought desperately

for several hours, at length the French ship fairly ran away, having had enough of it, and the York got safe into Dover harbour yesterday, very much mauled: it is only astonishing she was not taken, as Capt. G. had lent fifty of his men to the privateers, and had sixty French prisoners on board. He is a brave man; very much wounded, but it is hoped not mortally.

In one of the transports that were taken, there were 100 barrels of gunpowder and twelve field-pieces: these our brave privateers could not bring off, so they took out the men and blew the vessel up. Are you not excessively tired with this long detail? But I ought to have asked you that question half an hour ago, only I was unwilling to interrupt my interesting story. To be sure you must think by my talking so much about privateers, that I have a share in half a dozen at least. But really and truly I am quite disinterested in the affair. I used to look on these vessels formerly with great horror and detestation, as instruments of private rapine and plunder, without any national benefit; but since they have been taken into the service of government, and behaved so well, (for they fought most bravely,) I am determined to do them justice by talking you half dead with the recital of their exploits.

We

* We are every day in expectation of the French landing. Dungeness is the place suspected for their descent. Admiral Vernon has several times attempted to sail there from the Downs, but the wind is directly against him and fair for them. If they should land at Dungeness, they must come to London by Lymne Hill, which is very steep; and judicious people say a very slender force, and some cannon planted on the top of it, would be able to obstruct their march. But whether a great or less force be necessary, 'tis all one to us, who have absolutely none. The country is perfectly defenceless, not so much as the militia raised, and in this place a week ago I believe there could not be found a dozen musquets that could fire a bullet. The most active person here has been Sir G. Oxenden †, who has taken unwearied pains to persuade the people to be upon their guard. With much difficulty, about six weeks ago, he procured a general meeting, in hopes of carrying a subscription, but this was over-ruled, and it was agreed to raise the militia; however, the militia is not raised, nor has there been any appearance of defence till last

* When the Editor published the "Memoirs of Mrs. Carter," her Letters upon this subject, owing to the multitude of them which he had to look over, escaped his notice.

† Whose seat at Dean was ten miles from Deal.

Sunday. Athn. Vernon on Friday wrote a Letter to Mr. Norris, Governor of Deal Castle, or in his absence, to the Mayor of Deal, with an account that the embarkation was ready, and that Lowendahl, &c. were going from Dunkirk to Boulogne, and advised the Mayor to alarm the people, and put them upon their guard. The Mayor of Deal, being a peaceable quiet man, took no great notice of the matter. A person* at Deal accidentally saw it, and procured a copy, which was immediately sent to Sir G. Oxenden, and Sir Narborough D'Aeth, two of our Deputy Lieutenants, and the very next morning it appeared in the Canterbury newspaper, and with it an invitation from the Deputy Lieutenants for the people to arm themselves, and meet the next day at Swinfield Minnis, a common not far from Dungeness. Considering the shortness of the warning, their appearance was much better than could be expected. The smiths, &c. worked all night to get up arms. I believe about 3 or 400 horsemen went from Canterbury, and Capt. Palmer †, who was extremely active in

. . . . . the

* This person was her father, the Rev. Dr. Carter, Minister of Deal Chapel.

† Adjoining to Swinfield Minnis is an estate, then belonging to Capt. Palmer, called St. John's, where it is believed that King John resigned his crown to the Pope's Nuncio. St.

John's

the business, headed them, and several other gentlemen of the town went with them. The whole body at Swinfield was upwards of 2000, and many more are expected at the next meeting. The common people shew a great deal of alacrity and spirit, and if there is time to discipline them a little, I trust they will fight very well.

I could be much diverted to see how the Mayor of Deal must be surprized to see a letter, which he had kept so snug, appear where it ought to appear, in a public newspaper. How this affair came about is an absolute secret to him, and every one else, except those concerned in it. I had a letter last night from Deal, with an account that the Folkstone man of war had drove fourteen French transports and three men of war ashore on the French coast. My news and my paper are at an end, and indeed it is high time I should subscribe myself, &c.

John's was a preceptory of the celebrated knights of that name. The old house is still remaining, and is now the property of Sir Egerton Brydges, K.T. of Denton-Court.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Dec.* 30, 1745.

I do not know whether I should think of writing to you just now, dear Miss Carter, because every thing I can write from such a place must be vastly insipid to you at this time; but your seeming to doubt whether I had any genius for such news as you sent me, gives me an irresistible reason for taking the first leisure moment to thank you and to clear myself. Your Letters I am always glad to receive, but am now quite impatient for them; and yet after all, I do most heartily wish to receive no more, or that the next may begin with complaints of having nothing to say. I live in as much fear of those abominable French as you can do, for I hear they look upon this expedition into England as a crusade, and are set upon it with all the eagerness of bigotry.

I have too much English spirit to believe that if we are tolerably true to ourselves, and do not by any increase of wickedness alienate the care of Providence, which even now has in so many instances seemed kindly watchful over us, I cannot believe that in the end these triflers shall overcome so brave

and honest a people, or triumph over so just a cause *; but I greatly apprehend the miseries which their very attempt must cause, though ever so unsuccessful.

I rejoice in the spirit that has at length so justly exerted itself in your important part of the Island. Success and honour attend all that are brave and loyal amongst us!

As for poor Scotland, its distresses at this time must be beyond imagination, and I do not foresee what stop is likely to be put to it. The loyal party there will, I fear, suffer most severely now for the disappointment those rebels have met with here. In the mean time, what becomes of the Duke before Carlisle, one cannot but be anxious to know; and all this while, without any thing considerable being done, our troops are worn out and harrassed, people's money and spirits exhausting very fast, and I am full of fears that our patience, prudence, courage, and all our good dispositions, will be worn out before it comes to any decisive trial.

I hope I form a false judgment from what I have experienced in myself at chess. I can make the

* How applicable to the present times are these just and pious reflections! When we see the event of all this boasting of our enemies above sixty years ago, surely we ought not to despair, but rather rely more firmly on that gracious Providence, which has so often protected us.

ten

ten or twenty first moves very tolerably, but before the end of the game I am always too much tired to preserve my caution, and leave every thing unguarded.

If you see Mr. Wright, pray give my compliments to him. I hope it will scarce be a month before I see him myself in town. The word compliment puts me in mind of those I ought to send you peculiar to this season. May its next revolution find us all happier and more at ease than it does now.

Have you heard the story there is in London, that there is, among the prisoners you saw, a Macdonald (not the one you mention with so much terror) who has been supposed the young concealed Pretender, and answers the description given of him much better than young Radcliffe, but proves to be a lady, a mistress of Radcliffe's, who would not suffer him to come without her. I do not vouch the truth of this, but thought it worth transcribing.

Adieu! I hope you will not have one of your bad head-aches when this comes to you; but for fear you should, it will be but charity to spare your eyes, and conclude with the brief assurance of my being, dear Miss Carter, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Jan.* 6, 1746.

DEAR MISS TALBOT,

I am always glad of any pretence to write to you, though I have no news to acquaint you with but what you would not perhaps give a straw to hear, viz. that Admiral Vernon came to Canterbury on Saturday. He was at the cathedral on Sunday, and the body of the church was crowded with spectators. The deposition of this gentleman is matter of universal discontent in our part of the world. I do not understand these things, so cannot tell whether I am discontented or not, as I am always willing to suppose our governors act right; but I am very sorry to see so general a displeasure and gloominess in the faces of all people. The Admiral's orders for quitting were—As you desired to be discharged from your post, you have leave to resign.—Whereas he positively denies having testified any such desire. This came from himself to a gentleman here, and probably you know it all better than I do, but I was willing to retail all my knowledge.

I have

I have very dolorous Letters from my sister at Deal about the French embarkation, &c. &c. but I am somewhat encouraged by Mr. Knowles's account of the matter. How is one to decide on such contradictory relations? I am quite weary of conjecturing any thing about it, so leave the whole affair to Providence, and make myself quite easy. We have melancholy accounts from Dover about the distemper among the cattle. This place, thank God, is still healthy. One of the contractors for the navy at Deal had the villainy to send an infected ox on board a man of war. It was discovered, and sent on shore for the dogs, and, shocking to say, a cow that was grazing where it was hung up caught the distemper and died, but happily it went no further. If this was not the best age in the world for people who deserve to be hung, this fellow would meet with a most severe punishment.

I delivered your compliments to Mr. Wright when Miss Hall and I went to wait on Mr. Cowper. Miss Townsend draws most charmingly, better than Mr. Wright; but there is a Miss Mordant, who, for a study of two or three days, has made a most surprizing progress, at which I am half mad. She shewed us a little landscape with so much good-nature, that I forgive her an affront, which, in the gaiety

gaiety of good spirits, she gave us Kentish folks, by calling us, at a Canterbury assembly, *creatures*, and other such derogatory titles, which fine ladies are so bountiful in the disposal of. However, she is very pretty, and one cannot help being pleased with her. I must now wish you all possible happiness, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Jan.* 13, 1746.

I am a very bad Correspondent, my dear Miss Carter, and shall soon be a worse, for this day se'nnight I go to that idle place London, where, after the long solitude of this *paisible hameau*, I propose to spend four months in incessant talking, and all the variety of agreeable company I can hook myself into, without writing, or reading, or any of those kind of things. Nevertheless I shall always be glad to hear from Canterbury, though to be sure you misses in country towns, as the charmante personne you mention says, are but strange unlicked kind of creatures, when one looks down upon you from the beau monde. Poor souls! how I shall despise you a fortnight hence! At present (for

(for fine ladies should always be in extremes) I despise you as a town lady, who can amuse yourself with the gaieties of Canterbury, while I in a purer air am in all the heroics of pastoral, and wonder how any body can live in a place, where vile houses of brick and stone hinder the sight of that pure azure sky, and those glittering scenes of frost which at present I am in high raptures about. Seriously, I never saw any thing so beautiful as the landscape round us was this morning. A frozen fog had covered all our trees with the purest white you ever saw, at the same time that every thing was quite distinct. Our tall elms looked as if they had been covered with a profusion of bloom; and the sun shining out in all his glory in a serene blue sky, looked as gay as ever it did of a May morning.

I will not believe that those bright auspicious beams shine as delightfully on the French invaders, and hope strongly by this time your fears and panics are all over. I am infinitely obliged to you for your Letter, and would have thanked you without waiting for a second, if I had not been a good deal engaged in winding up my bottoms here just at going away. I have a million of things to do every moment I stay. Books to send out, pieces of work to finish, a vast reformation to make in the spinning manufactory, provisions to make for all the cats and

and birds left behind us; and an infinitude more of the same importance. Adieu, therefore; I am too much *affairée* to write you a long Letter, but busy or idle, am always equally, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Feb.* 22, 1746.

I should long before this, my dear Miss Talbot, have acknowledged the obligation every Letter from you lays me under, if I had not been prevented by a very melancholy occasion, which cast such a gloom over my thoughts, and filled me with so many sad apprehensions, that I could not apply myself to any thing. Though, I thank God, I have reason to be much easier than I was, I have not yet recovered my spirits; however, I will defer writing no longer, a circumstance for which you are little obliged to me, as it arises entirely from my strong desire of hearing from you. For after all, how can I either say any thing that will please you or myself from the dull confinement of a chamber? I congratulate you on the happy fluttering kind of life which by your own account you are by this time engaged in: I can perfectly conceive

ceive the joy of talking with a thousand people one half of the day, for I positively will not believe but you spend the other half very quietly and decently in the sober conversation of books; if not, with all your gaiety, I heartily pity you. For my own interest, however, I hope this epistle will find you in the giddy part of your existence, for if you are then, what you tell me you are, a fine lady, it may have the good luck to pass for a very entertaining piece; for I have observed *fine ladies* are very fond of calling things by such names as nobody else would know them by. A pretty flutterer of this species——and thereupon I was going to tell you a mighty silly story, but seeing it is a mighty silly one, I may as well let it alone, for it is ten to one whether it may divert you, though it did me.

I should have wrote to day time enough to give you an account of the prizes that were brought into the Downs last night; but my Letter would not have reached you till Monday, and by that time you may be better acquainted with the particulars than I. Three hundred of the common soldiers were brought ashore this evening, and were mighty gay, and called the spectators their country people: 'tis an odd thing that folks should seem fond of claiming a relation that will serve to hang them. They are lodged just beside us, and make a horrible

horrible noise, and are so troublesome that the soldiers have been obliged to fire in among them. I heartily wish they were safe in Dover Castle.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Brompton, *May* 2, 1746.

You may with great appearance of reason, dear Miss Carter, accuse me of unpardonable neglect in leaving your Letter so many months unanswered, but did you know how I have passed those heavy months, and how possible it is that I may be some weeks longer without any opportunity of finishing this Letter, you would be convinced that those charitable allowances, which good-natured people make to their friends when their conduct seems most unaccountable, are as just as they are kind.

—It is not for the ceremony of making all these apologies before I said any thing else, that I omitted sending you our great and joyful news* by the first post, which would but have been common gratitude in return for all the Kentish intelligence

* The victory of Culloden gained on the 16th of April, 1746.

you

you sent me when our fears were at the highest; but I really had not an opportunity that day—indeed I have none but such broken minutes, that if I aim at writing you a long Letter it will be all patch-work; however a Letter you shall have, for I am told you are still in bad spirits, and out of conceit with the world, so before you go and shut yourself up in a cell, I am resolved to bring the ideas of the world into your mind once more, by a history of the charming, giddy, racketing winter I told you in my last I intended to pass. You may be sure it is nothing but mere gaiety and amusement that has filled my time, and turned my head; I could not find leisure to write to you, no not so much as to enquire the meaning of one part of your Letter, which gave me great uneasiness, where you mentioned some distress you had been in, and which was not yet over, without explaining what it was. Mr. Wright tells me it was your sister's illness, I hope she is now perfectly well again, though I fear you have not yet recovered your spirits——O yes, but to be sure you have, for since writing the last sentence, I have received a Letter* from you, dear Miss Carter, that is an evident proof of your seeing the world, and every thing in it, with the gayest view imaginable. None

* Which Letter is lost.

but

but a poetical liveliness of fancy could have dressed up any thing so perfectly insignificant and insipid as I am, in all those good and ornamental qualities you complimented me with; but, to say the truth, your Letter flatteur as it was, put me into good humour, and I feel myself infinitely obliged to you. It is very true that in the beginning of the winter, before I had entered into any of its gaieties, I had a slow fever which lasted a long while, frequently confining me to my bed for days, and rendering me unfit for any thing but sitting in an easy chair, and purring over some plain serious books. Just as I was recovering Mrs. * Secker was taken alarmingly ill, and upon her account we left town, she is growing better though slowly, and I hope in about a fortnight we shall get into the country.

Our intermediate state is living at Brompton, from whence we go every day to dine in London; by which means we have neither the gaiety, nor company of the one, nor the leisure and retirement of the other, however, this sort of life is by no means an unagreeable one, though rather too hurrying. There is no enumerating the thousand little trifling interruptions that one is liable to, and which heartily vex me: but it is best not to be vexed

* The Bishop of Oxford's wife. She was sister to Dr. Benson, Bishop of Gloster. She did not die till 1748.

at any thing one cannot help, we should rather endeavour to see them in the pleasantest point of view. Our constant morning airings which engross a great deal of my time, have at least given me more enjoyment of the spring than I have had for many years, and I think it particularly beautiful in a country so well cultivated, and which is all laid out into gardens, as it is about London. Our lodgings are extremely pretty, and situated in the midst of a large garden, where I have sometimes flattered myself that I heard the nightingale; however, when she does not please to sing, the cuckoo and the thrush do as well.

Your first Letter (for though it is so long ago, I have, not like Sir Charles Easy, put snuff into it and worn it out,) enquires after new books. There is one of Critical Observations on Shakespeare by Mr. Upton, that I believe you would think worth reading. Dodsley's Museum has one or two pretty Essays in it, though I thought he set out but indifferently. If I have seen any thing else I have not time to recollect it, as I am determined this Letter shall go by to day's Post, and is not much intended for a catalogue of books, as for an assurance that I am, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *May* 30, 1746.

I am always particularly glad to pay my compliments to you, my dear Miss Talbot, when you are quietly settled in the country, principally because I have then the favor of hearing from you oftener, and moreover because my Letters appear to much greater advantage to you, than amidst the hurry of *universal business* at London, where in the crowd of other nonsensical things they can claim no particular distinction. But now you are left to the possession of your own thoughts, nonsense becomes a rarity, and I have the satisfaction of entertaining you with something new.

I most really rejoice to find you perfectly recovered, but at the same time have a most irreconcileable quarrel against you, for maliciously and slanderously calling the concern I exprest for your health in very sincere prose, poetical flights. However I have still so much charity as to wish you very sincerely the continuance of it, and the most complete enjoyment in that of your friends. I hope by this time Mrs. Secker is quite recovered.

What can I write to you about worth reading? I see nothing and hear of nothing except a raree-

show, which I find from the testimony of a bawling historian, exhibits a full and true representation of the glorious actions of *Duke William.* I shall never be able to resist the temptation of seeing it, both from my affection for raree-shows in general, and the subject of this whom I honour beyond all Dukes one has ever heard of, from Duke Teman *, to the present time. I hope I shall not now write you such dolorous terrifying accounts from Kent as I did last year. We often hear lamentable stories about the Brest squadron, but they are so strangely contradictory, that one may be comforted with doubting whether there be any such thing as the Brest squadron in being. It were to be wished that our accounts from Flanders would admit of the same uncertainty. However the battle is not always to the strong, and one may argue as the Greeks did with regard to Xerxes, that Providence will not commit the liberties of mankind to a tyrant. I have just been reading the history of his mad expedition in Herodotus, which I always read with extreme pleasure, as I do every other story that furnishes any remarkable defeat of the wicked schemes of ambition and despotic power. Are not you always very sorry to find Artemisia engaged in

* Grandson of Esau; one of the Canaanitish heads of families called in our version *Dukes.* Genesis xxxvi. 15.

the

the support of so bad a cause? I have strangely rambled from raree-shows to kings, queens, and a serious discourse upon politics and history. To be sure you must think I mean to talk to you and ask you questions about every thing that is or ever was, and when I have gone through this world, to tell you my own, and then enquire your opinion concerning apparitions.

I am extremely delighted to find you express yourself with so much uncertainty about nightingales, for it is a point in which I could never arrive at any tolerable degree of satisfaction. However I agree with you in being perfectly contented with the black-bird and cuckoo, which is more than I am with those frightful animals May bugs, which have greatly molested my walks this spring. I never heard of these in any other country but this; you cannot conceive the force of my trouble without some description. They are creatures with only one head, no feathers, but two wings, and are a good deal less than a crab, and not at all like it. From this very accurate description, equally clear with many I have met with in books, you will no doubt form a very perfect idea of these formidable enemies of mine. They commit great devastations in our flowery fields of Kent, and put me much in mind of the Northern army in Joel, The Land ———— but I need not quote the passage

passage to you, who must have taken notice of the inimitable beauty of it.

Be so good, dear Miss Talbot, as to indulge my curiosity so much as to let me know how you came by the idea that I was out of conceit with the world, and going to shut myself up in a hollow tree. I have no displeasure against the world in general, nor against any thing in it, very lasting. My sister's* illness did indeed affect me beyond any thing I ever met with in my whole life, not merely from the thoughts of losing her, though a most melancholy loss it would have been, but from the apprehension of her suffering such excessive pain. I thank God she is now so well, as to be thought entirely out of danger, but it will be some time before she can be said to be perfectly well. I ought to beg your pardon for dwelling so long on this subject, though it has done you less harm than it has me. However, it is right sometimes to recall one's most unhappy moments, in order to have a proper sense of gratitude for a joyful reverse of them.

I want very much to know whether you have ever read a book I have just met with, which I can tell you nothing about, but that it is the oddest thing I ever read, and that it made me laugh very heartily.

* Her only sister by the same mother, afterwards Mrs. Pennington.

The

The title is *Acajou et Zirphile.* What strange comical mortal wrote it?

Shall I finish this side? No, for I have already wrote more than you will read, or if you would than you can. One passage, however, I will endeavour to make as legible as a shaking hand will give me leave, namely to assure you that I am with the most perfect esteem, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *June* 21, 1746.

You deliberate, my dear Miss Carter, whether you shall finish your fourth side, and I to be even with you, am almost at the point of deliberating whether I shall begin the first, for even Acajou et Zirphile afford you some amusement, but neither amusement or edification are you like to get from me. However I will write if it be but to enquire what is the occasion of this shaking hand you complain of, it looks nervous, and if so I am much inclined to pity you for it, and at the same time to warn you to be upon your guard against all its encroachments, arm all your good sense and resolution to conquer the worst enemy I know of,

to

to the comfort of good people. Spirits that have any thing of delicacy are easily and strongly affected, and influence the body so as to make it a very troublesome companion, and I know nothing one would not do to avoid being nervous. Exercise even when one makes it quite a slavery, is the best remedy and preservative I know, and with a due proportion of trifling and even merry idleness would I fancy be almost infallible. I cannot, indeed, boast that I have been in perfect good spirits myself since I came down here, the consequence of a winter spent in fear and melancholy anxiety; but the cheerfulness of country scenes, the leisure I have had to recollect myself, and clear away all disagreeable thoughts, with the sovereign cordial of the best air I believe in England, has set them to rights again, and I begin to enjoy the happiness of my situation. Is it not vastly impertinent of me to talk to you so much about myself in every Letter, when you make so many excuses for dwelling a very little on a thing of so much importance to you as your sister's illness? You cannot think how much you would oblige me by carrying me sometimes to Deal, and introducing me to your family circle, shewing me your apartment, your favourite walk, giving me a notion of your way of life, and chatting with me freely about whatever happens to be then most in your mind. For in short we poor animaux,

that

that live a mere domestic life, what have we to talk of, but our domestique, or in the phrase that is now more fashionable, and which this weather makes no way unreasonable, our *fire-side*. Is it possible you should not have seen that admirable copy of verses yet*? If I can get one in time I will send it you, for though you should have got it before, you are certainly more worthy of having such a thing twice over, than some fine folks I shewed it to yesterday, were of hearing it once. It is really quite provoking to see wit thrown away upon people who discover their total want of taste by such ill placed marks of approbation, as one sees are thrown in, out of mere civility. Yet this is a sort of people that deserve toleration, for after all if they are easy and good humoured, they vary one's thoughts with such sort of chit chat as saves us from growing too wise. I have no notion of the fine lady airs of hating neighbours, people that one has any sort of pretence to esteem; whether their way of thinking, or their turn of conversation, is just suitable to one's fancy or not 'tis no great matter, they mix up in society very well, and society we were made for.

* "The Fire-side," a Parody of the second Epode of Horace, by the late Isaac Hawkins Browne, Esq.

Bless

Bless me what a digression have I made: nevertheless I shall find my way back to Deal. Seriously do you not think it would be a high delight to me, if by some art magic I could be made to put my head invisibly in at your parlour window, and see you with all your family chatting over your tea? The enchantress that must give me a pleasure something of the same kind must be yourself, for to be sure she who could write that inimitable description of a May-bug, may give one as lively and resembling ideas of any thing she pleases.

The person who told me you had been in low spirits was Mr. Wright, who to avoid the consequences of your displeasure is embarked for Ireland.

I have no room left to talk politics. But I have all possible indignation against the French and their insolent King, and think the Duke almost hero enough to chastise him with a very inferior force, if we were a people deserving of such glory; but sooner or later I fear we are marked for destruction. As for the Dutch, their meanness, stupidity, and impertinence is beyond expression. Adieu! the Bishop of Oxford comforted me about your shaking hands (for I cannot be such a churl as to keep your Letter quite to myself) by putting me in mind of an observation we heard the other day, that a lady's hand always shakes most sensibly, when she is about

to

to sign her marriage articles; oh! that your shaking hand would but bring you into some part of the world where I might sometimes see you, but distant as you are, I am most faithfully, dear Miss Carter, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *July* 5, 1746.

You are extremely good, dear Miss Talbot, to make such kind enquiries after my tremors, and in return it is but just to tell you very honestly, that so far from its being occasioned by the trepidation of signing a marriage contract, I do not know a man upon earth that would be troubled with me, and therefore I have for some time thought it but right and prudent to give up all schemes of this sort to my younger sister, and sit quietly down with my books, and half a dozen friends, who between sense and nonsense engage my attention agreeably enough to prevent my finding any thing very deplorable in my condition.

I hope the good-natured caution you give me about nervous disorders, does not proceed from a melancholy experience of their sad effects. Few people,

people, I believe, have suffered more from them than myself. I am charmed to hear you speak so advantageously of exercise, which I have found almost the only remedy, and in which I have long persevered though with some difficulty. To reject the advice of those who profess to love one and to have a regard for one's happiness, has such an appearance of perverseness and ingratitude, that it requires some degree of fortitude to persevere in a resolution taken up on ever such reasonable grounds, when they oppose it so strongly. There are several well meaning folks in the world apt to pronounce one quite mad for acting contrary to certain maxims which they have laid down, without at all considering what they mean by them, a case by no means uncommon even with people who in other instances do not want sense. Thus one shall hear a long wise harangue about moderation without any regard to its being merely relative, and consequently that the same degree of exercise which would be death to one person is absolutely necessary to the well doing of another. I have had the complaisance out of attention to the opinions of others to be less constant in my walking this summer than usual, and the consequence is, I have never been free from a head ach and a slow fever. But your Letter has spirited me up, and I have been out walking every

morning

morning since I received it, and find I am better, and not worse for it, so I mean to continue it *.

I am extremely obliged to you for the "Fire-Side," with which I am greatly delighted. I had neither seen nor heard of it before. I have lately picked up an old book which contains a great many notable things, and which I must trouble you for some account of. It has lost the title page, but the sections are named Aries, Taurus, &c. and it seems to be a translation from the Italian †. It furnishes me with great store of quotations, which are a great annoyance to some of my acquaintance, as insensible to the beauties of them as the fine ladies you mention to those of the Fire-Side, only they are more open, and make me all manner of reproaches for being delighted with such nonsense.

You have not for a great while told me any thing about drawing, and I long to know what improvement you must have made. If it was not very unreasonable for me to engage any more of your time than you are already so good as to afford me, I should most earnestly beg you to make me the

* Part of this Letter containing an account of Mrs. Carter's manner of employing her time at Deal, is omitted here, as it was printed in her Memoirs, P. 90, 4to edition.

† The "Zodiake of Life," from the Latin of an Italian poet, Palingenius. For an account of this very scarce and curious book, See "Censura Literaria," Vol. ii. No. 7.

happiest

happiest of creatures by drawing me your own picture, if it was only sketched with a black-lead pencil. I know not whether I am in most confusion at mentioning this request, or at the idea of your showing my Letters to the Bishop of Oxford; but between both I find I begin to be excessively silly, so will release you, after having assured you of my most perfect esteem.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Aug.* 12, 1746.

One should scarce think, dear Miss Carter, by the little haste I have made in answering your last Letter, that it gave me so much pleasure as it really did. Nothing could be more agreeable to me than the description of your way of living, though your activity is so much more happy and more wise than my own indolence, that I could not read it without some self-reproach. 'Tis that very indolence that has so long prevented my answering your Letter; and when I would make it a little plausible, I flatter myself with thinking all I can do is so very indifferently done, and to so little purpose, that I may just as well let it alone. You smile

smile at my calling this flattery, yet how many people do in this way flatter themselves out of the best ends of their being, and sooth their lazy inclination by fancying they have much less in their power than they really have.

For your sake, as well as my own, I wish I had spent last week in town. Some of my friends who attended the trials * have given me such a description of the majesty of that great court of judicature, and the striking solemnity of the whole proceeding, that I think the ideas it must have raised in any attentive mind, would have been well worth having. I fancy that laying in a store of ideas against old age is the wisest kind of hoarding; the memory and the imagination want something to work upon in a long inactive life, and great incidents are as necessary to exercise our faculties, as great journies are every now and then to preserve our health. All those who were capable of feeling strong emotions, of being deeply struck with awe, softened by compassion, or warmed by the love of their country, have, I find, been greatly moved with this solemn sight. After hearing this great assembly compared with, and preferred to, the Areopagus of Athens and the Senate of Rome, the

* The trial of the rebel Lords before the House of Peers in Westminster Hall.

august appearance, the awful silence undisturbed by the least whisper; in short, after having received every great and solemn idea from people who had gone with serious and cultivated minds, judge how I was surprized at falling into a set of company who represented it as a mere drum. They told me how such a one was dressed, who looked in beauty, whose hair was out of curl, who wore diamonds, who was guilty of the great enormity of eating cold chicken, or wore a cap without lappets. To these idlers, Westminster Hall, on this terrible occasion, was a mere place of diversion. Now, how can one trust to people's descriptions, since they always take such a tincture from the fancy they pass through. To a fine woman every thing will appear in some form of dress, to a profound politician even the plainest fact wears a face of intrigue and mystery.

> "Thus does one climate and one soil endue,
> The blushing poppy with the crimson hue,
> Yet leave the lily pale, the violet blue."

At this time I am deep in the mazes of politics, not that King Oberon has consulted me about the government of his fairy subjects, or that I am aiming at some public post under the Emperor of the Moon; but we are engaged in reading Cardinal

de

de Retz's Memoirs, which are writ with much wit and spirit, and give one such strong lessons against craft and ambition, that I know nothing more proper to set off (if they wanted any foil) the charms of a simple country life. I am reading too the Memoirs de Mad^lle^. de Montpensier, an excellent chit-chat book. Memoirs are a study next to that of the living world of all others; perhaps not much the better for that, but yet 'tis worth knowing its ways, if it were only to despise them, and to pity those who call themselves the gay and the prosperous.

It is now time to write somewhat of an answer to your Letter. I applaud you highly for persevering in the use of exercise, if you find it really agree with you. I shall not harangue you upon moderation, because I have too just an opinion of you to think you would (as many silly folks do) pursue the means in contradiction to the end you aim at. I have been long broke to all those regards, and can ride out as tamely, just as softly, and just as long or as little a while as they would have me, as I can take any other medicine. Marvellous! what a drove of *asses* I have sent you in that last sentence. I beg your pardon, but I cannot allow myself time to write correctly in this fine weather. I wish you was going to share my walk, but since that cannot be, I am impatient to take

one, e'en with a book. Indeed if you were with me, I could contentedly sit on in my little green closet. But alas, I am only talking to myself all this while, and it is much more sociable talking to an echo. How charming it would be if at the end of my walk I could find myself (just at eight) at your evening rendezvous. I should do you no harm, for I am a mighty quiet silent body, and I am sure they must be clever sensible people that you have spent your evening hours with for so many years. That one circumstance vaut toute une panegyrique, and if I could but transport that house into my neighbourhood, and set it down here, in a charming pretty field just by, (and which, now it is come into my head, I shall never pass through without thinking of it) I would never fail meeting you there for fourteen years to come, God willing.

I can give you no account of my drawing, for I am not one step advanced; and as for my *own* picture of my *own* drawing, there are few people whom I should not sooner choose to send it to; for though my Letters may sometimes make you doubt of my rationality, yet I would fain have you think of me as a human creature: I did attempt it once, but I assure you the likeness was more mortifying than the worst of looking-glasses. Adieu, &c.

MRS. CARTER TO MISS TALBOT.

Deal, *Sept.* 5, 1746.

I SHALL not at present, dear Miss Talbot, pretend to determine whether what you do is well or ill done, but in order to take away all possible colour of excuse, beg leave to assure you, that whether your Letters are well or ill wrote, sense or nonsense, it is very certain they give me very great pleasure, and upon this occasion I find it to my own interest de me servir de votre compliment, que cela vaut toute une panegyrique.

Vous avez crue me faire rire d'une espece de flatterie dont j'ai soupirée. Helas, cela ne se trouve que trop souvent, et a des consequences fort facheuses. Je connois des gens, qui a force de s'être flatté qu'ils ne sont que des vauriens, le sont devenu tout de bon. Il n'y a point de gens plus incorrigibles que ceux là. Les folies les plus outrés ne leur coutent rien, ils y marchent de pied ferme, et de sang froid. Ils se sont figuré d'être de si peu de consideration qu'on ne leur demandera pas conte de leurs actions. Beau moyen de se defaire de la peine qu'on trouve à moderer ces passions!

Il y a quelque tems Mademoiselle que je vous quitte, me voici de retour. Ou en etois je avec

mes observations? je n'en sais rien n'importe; je passerai a des autres sujets qui vaudront peut être tout autant, c'est a dire fort peu de chose.

Que je vous plains de n'être pas folle de la musique! je vien d'entendre une chanson sur une epinette, chantée par une très belle voix qui m'a tout-a-fait charmé; vous croyerex peut-être que je l'ai acheté bien chère, puisque j'ai marché cinq miles par un chemin sabloneux, ou il ne s'est trouvé pas un seul arbrisseau, mais malgré tout cela la chanson m'a fort bien récompensé. Pourquoi me suis je avisé de vous écrire en françois, car assurement je l'écris fort mal? Apparemment c'est que j'avois un présentiment que je ne dirois que des sottises, et les sottises se dissent mieux en cette langue que dans la notre. Je vais pourtant reprendre l'Anglois, et je vous conseille de me quitter car je n'ai pas encore finie sur la musique. To be sure you think me very extravagant in my * fondness for this amusement, but I really owe

* This fondness for music continued through life, especially for the compositions of Handel and Corelli. Little more than a year before she died, the Editor saw her in her eldest brother's drawing-room at Deal, listening for more than two hours with unabating attention and delight to the performance and singing of her two youngest nieces, Mr. Carter's daughters, accompanied on the violin by their father, then in his 81st year, and their uncle, her younger brother.

more to its influence than most people. I seldom hear an agreeable air but it recalls to my mind almost every pleasing occurrence of my life, and gives me a new enjoyment of it. Every body I either love or admire, every conversation that struck me with peculiar pleasure, and every fine passage of a favourite author, the powerful magic of Mr. Handel conjures up to my thoughts. One sometimes finds an effect like this in a solitary evening walk, from a calm sky and a beautiful view of rural scenes, but the images arising from these are more faint and languid, and at best lull one into a kind of waking insensibility. On the contrary, music, at the same time that it impresses a thousand vivid phantoms on the mind, gives one spirits to attend to all their varieties without fatigue. After all, what connection is there between fine prospects and harmonious sounds, and the very remote ideas they summon up? One may perhaps in some measure account for these strange effects by supposing that the mind cannot rest satisfied with the confused sensations of a mere mechanical pleasure, and therefore at the same time that it finds itself affected with agreeable impressions, calls in some species of moral good to explain and support them. I think, however, I had better let these points alone, and proceed to thank you for your excellent observations upon the great solemnity at Westminster

Westminster Hall. I often transported myself there in idea, and always in your company. From the disputes which at present arise in almost every company, I was led to look over the two celebrated speeches in Sallust. I opened the book with a full determination to like Cæsar's speech, and in spite of my said determination, before I shut it I was obliged to prefer Cato's. But indeed neither of them are applicable to affairs in our own country.

I cannot pretend to follow you in your deep political studies, but I too have been reading Memoirs, namely, the Memoirs of Ulysses, which in pure reverence to the name of Homer, I have with some difficulty just got through; perhaps it may not be to my credit to confess this, and several passages which my want of judgment makes to appear tedious, ought to be admired for their noble simplicity; but really it does not seem of any great importance to the reader whether Telemachus (like a notable housewifely young man as he was) hung his cloaths upon a peg, or was sloven enough to throw them on the floor; or whether Mr. Trulliber* (I have forgot his Greek name) took exact care of the hogs. If it was not an incontestible fact

* Eumæus. Had such a poem been written in this age of refinement, the censure would have been just. Mrs. Carter's criticism was not designed for the public; had she meant to give

fact that Milton wrote Paradise Regained, one could never believe Homer wrote the Odyssey.

I ought to make a thousand apologies for this strange nonsensical Letter, which has been begun these ten days, and I have sat so often down to it that it is filled with nothing but bits, and ends, and snuffs of thoughts; but was I to write it again, it is ten to one if I should improve it. I cannot leave off without telling you how gladly I would consent to be whirled through the air in some fairy vehicle, and be set down on the spot you have allotted for me, but should be extremely disappointed in the end of my journey to find you *quiet* and *silent*. Nothing but the distance of a hundred miles could make me satisfied with a quiet image of you, and this you cruelly deny your, &c.

give a serious opinion, her taste was too good to have allowed her to throw any ridicule upon the interesting delineation of the domestic manners of the Greeks, which is to be found in the Odyssey.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Oct.* 31, 1746.

I know it very well, dear Miss Carter, I have owed you a Letter ever since the 5th of last month, since when you have been so good as to send me * another, with the earliest intelligence of news, which you knew would delight me. How my time has gone away I will not pretend to say; riding and airing has broke almost all my mornings, and when I return from riding I am too tired to do any thing but pore over a book. There is not any thing wearies me more than fear; I am a grievous coward on horseback, and, unfortunately for me, this year I am mounted on a creature, that, as Shakespear describes such a one, "is all air and fire, the grosser elements have no part in him." I go in one constant panic of being run away with; by this means I lose all the joy of fine weather; for that one paltry attention to my own safety swallows up all others. In vain the canopy of heaven spreads its pure azure over my head, in vain the rich gilding of autumn heightens every wood and

* This Letter is missing.

grove;

grove; here glows into vermillion, and there fades into pale yellow: I have no leisure to think of either painting or poetry, but I jog on as stupidly as I can, and if I pass a day without some ingenious fright, or entertaining my companions with a musical squall, I think myself both happy and wise. And do we not most of us jog through life much in the same way as I have described my ride? The world is filled with objects of beauty and delight, but wrapped up in the wretched but necessary cares and fears of every day, we can scarce cast a passing glance on those charming prospects, but get over one hour after another as well as we can, and seem to wait for some better time of enjoyment, when our capacity shall be improved, and our leisure uninterrupted: sure 'tis a proof this is no resting place for man.

Vous me plaignez fort charitablement de n'être pas folle de la musique, mais je puis vous assurer que je le suis, et même que je l'ai été de toutes les manieres. You may not perhaps apprehend that there is more than one way of loving music, but I think I can prove from my own experience, as unmusical as you think me, that there are half a dozen. One may be quite fond of it for *it's* own sake, for *one's* own sake, or for the sake of *other people*; out of taste, fashion, melancholy, gaieté de cœur, complaisance, reason, and partiality. In

all

all these ways have I at times been musically mad; I think at present I am reduced to a simple natural taste in it; I enjoy the melody of birds with great cheerfulness; but solemn music of all others is the joy of my heart, and if I hear a fine anthem well sung, it raises me above the world, and gives me a pleasure there is no describing. Lighter music, and especially the Italian, affects me when it is good, but not in so agreeable a way as it does you. It fills me with thoughts and recollections, but they have generally a melancholy turn, and soften my mind into sadness that I do not love to indulge. En vérité, Mademoiselle, vous êtes admirable avec votre compassion, je trouve que j'ai l'ame fort harmonieuse, a tel point qu'il ne vient jamais a la porte aucun de ces Orphées errants qui jouent du violon, ou même du bagpipe qui ne se ressent de ma liberalité. Même je crois, quoique vous en parlez avec assez d'humilité, que si votre epinette etoit portable, et vous vinsiez jouer à la porte quelque jour de fête, je ne vous renverrois pas sans une pièce de six sols.

I have followed your rule very exactly of talking nothing but nonsense in French. C'est la seule langue au monde pour badiner.

I will assume a more serious language to reprove you for all the wicked things you say about Homer. I cannot possibly agree in your sentiments of the Odyssey,

Odyssey, for it has been always a very favourite poem of mine. See the benefit of ignorance! perhaps you too, if you had never read any Odyssey but Mr. Pope's, would be fond of it. I read it last year in very agreeable society, and very great amusement it gave us. Mr. Pope's verse can give dignity to a *peg* or a *pig*, and the divine Eumæus is so worthy a man, that I overlook the unlucky circumstance of his being a hog-herd. I confess I have had some uncharitable doubts about Penelope, and her neglect of Ulysses's old dog offended me much; but I think upon the whole she was a very good woman. Some time or other (for I do not utterly despair) when I have the happiness of seeing you often, we will read the Odyssey together, and if you still continue unconverted, I really think you will deserve to be condemned to put Baron de Polnitz's Memoirs into heroic verse, and make a better modern Odyssey of your own. Perhaps you never read that wise book, which is at present our evening's amusement. It is the memoirs of a complete travelled coxcomb, who yet gives one some information amid a heap of fooleries, and leads us through Europe amusingly enough, if the heart is not set on wisdom. I do not know where this will find you. Perhaps you may choose to enliven the gloom of November by a visit to Canterbury.

Canterbury. Wherever you are, you have my best wishes for your health and happiness, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Nov.* 1, 1746.

It is such an age, dear Miss Talbot, since I had the pleasure of a Letter from you, that I can no longer forbear expressing my concern at it. Do, I entreat you, let me have a line, though it should say you forgot to write to me, or was too indolent; I will excuse any thing, provided you are well.

A long, anxious confinement, has deprived me of every topic of discourse, and I have not even any adventures of my own to relate among Oreades and Hamadryads, though I hope now to be able to renew my acquaintance with them. It would have been prudent, on my first immersion into open air, to have paid them a visit, which would have been a more easy transition from a state of long inactivity, than unadvisedly venturing myself on the King's birth-day among a hundred nymphs of a more vociferous kind. Such a variety of people

people would at another time have given me great delight, but in a severe fit of the head-ach, seemed such noise and impertinence that I was forced to retire into the quietest room in the house, occupied by four-and-twenty children. Only think from what an uproar one must fly to the quietude of four-and-twenty children! but however, I found the misses more quiet than their mamas; there was no rattling of fans, collision of hoops, nor violence of ceremony among them, and their noise was nothing but one uniform transport of squalling extacy at the fire-work, which might be very fine for any thing I know, but none pleased me half so well as a dark lantern, which I with difficulty procured, and transported myself from these lively scenes to the stupid tranquillity of a silent room.

Have people utterly left off writing books? I have not heard of a new one this century, excepting one on the wonders of Tar-water. I thought the strong appetite to this medicine had been greatly worn off, and that folks now were universally agreed in the fashionable fury of drinking up the sea, an experiment perhaps much the less safe of the two. Tar-water being thus again in high repute, several of my acquaintance have persuaded me into a consent to drink it, though I depend but little upon its efficacy with regard to myself; however, as one ought to give a medicine fair play, I intend

intend to persevere as far as a hogshead will go, before I pronounce that it does me no good. Would it not do just as well if one was to swallow a sixty gun man of war*?

I am quite tired of talking so much, and to so little purpose, about myself, so will only conclude with requesting some account of your health, and assurances of my being, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Nov.* 14, 1746.

I have absolutely no time—well, that is no matter, for positively you shall write to Miss Carter, before you are half an hour older—half an hour, why in that half hour I have half an hundred things to do. Notwithstanding that multiplicity of business, Miss Carter must be writ to I tell you—at least begin, "Chi ben comincia ha la metà del'opra;" and I will write at least a line every day, dear Miss Carter, till I have furnished out a decent Letter to thank you for your kind en-

* It is presumed that the bottoms of ships at that period were *tarred* and not *coppered*.

quiry

quiry after me. I cannot even own it to be indolence that made me so long silent, but some strange witchcraft that makes all my time glide away without suffering me to do any thing in it to any purpose. 'Tis a note to this body, a message to that, an errand to one end of the house, and a whim that sends me to the other: a robin to be fed at this window, and a tom-tit to be attended to at another, cats, or chickens, or spinsters, or ague patients. To be sure Methusalem was a happy man, if he had any genius for filling up his time. In so short a life as fourscore or an hundred years, one has really no leisure for writing long Letters. Had I been Miss Hilpa*, the antediluvian damsel, and you such another, how we should have corresponded! But why after all should we so much wish for time to employ in the sorry businesses of this world; and what is there except the calls of duty that are to be preferred to the employment of keeping up an agreeable acquaintance with those we love and esteem? Repose ye shells and pencils untouched in your drawer; be silent ye chirpers without your breakfast, and you venerable or elegant authors remain upon your shelf, for write to Miss Carter I must, since she is so kind as to inquire after me.

* See the Spectator, N° 584.

Here

Here I am then, dear Miss Carter, just where the last Letter left me, and the next and many others I hope will find me, in the prettiest place, the happiest situation, the sweetest retirement, that perhaps is to be met with. In health as well as need be, (for I think a little disorder now and then makes one enjoy health the better) I wish sincerely you was half as well, I hope you will be most sincerely, before you have drank up half that ocean of Tar-water you are arming yourself with perseverance to swallow. It is a pity the waters of Helicon are not so medicinal, for to be sure they would be pleasanter to yourself and your friends too, but I find you have brought from thence the maxim of " Drink deep or taste not."

I can give no answer as to your enquiry about new books, for I have seen none worth recommending. The Beauties, is a pretty elegant copy of verses, but you that have not been in town since the present race of beauties came into bloom, would not be so much pleased with it. Have you forsworn London? What matter is that to you who are so little there, you will say? Why in truth the country life is much the most rational, much the pleasantest, and as for seeing the people one likes——why one must learn to like the people one sees I think; and indeed for me, who am placed among such friends, and in a very agreeable neighbourhood,

bourhood, 'tis no hard task; that there are other agreeable friends, in other parts of the world ought to be no matter of complaint; but if they were to come into this neighbourhood then indeed it would be matter of joy. Adieu! dear Miss Carter, allow me to assure you of a truth beyond all power of doubt, which is that I am, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Dec.* 8, 1746.

I have called my poor stupid harmless Letter a thousand hard names for not coming back when it met your's upon the road, but as you kindly, my dear Miss Talbot, did it more honour than it deserved, I am again reconciled to it.

I was much alarmed at first at this same Hippogriph* that transports you with so much rapidity over the face of the earth, but upon reflection that you are among people too sensible of the value of such a life as your's, to suffer it to run any real danger, I am tolerably well comforted, and only pity you extremely for your fears which I can but too well

* An animal half horse, half griffin, on which Astolfo rode. Ariosto.

comprehend. After all how is one to conquer this most ungovernable of all passions? There is surely nothing more mortifying than to find oneself subject to groundless alarms. In most other passions there is some fancied excellence, or that serves to flatter us in the unreasonable solicitude we feel about it, but this presents one with nothing but a sad reflection upon human weakness. I have tried every method I could think of, to prevent my being an egregious coward, and all I have gained by my endeavours is sometimes to hide it from other people, a sorrowful instance that the reason which may give a decency to outward actions, will not always make one internally happy or wise.

I do not know with all my terrors, whether I should not have been glad of some such volatile animal as your's to convey me hither last week, instead of a drawling stage coach. However I spent as little time in it as possible, for hearing we were to take up a fat man; and who upon earth could have patience to wait till a fat man was ready? I made my escape and left my name with every passenger I met on the road, for the information of the coachman that I had not deserted him entirely, and he had besides sometimes the satisfaction of discovering a glimpse of me, dancing before him like a spirit which he was not very likely to overtake. He seemed to bear it tolerably well at first, but at

the end of nine or ten miles he lost all patience, and using his utmost efforts to come up with me, scolded very heartily. Bless me how the man did storm! He said, did I take his horses for negroes, that I used them like dogs, and it was a shame people should be treated so, for I had done them more harm than forty passengers, and he was obliged to *drive* like old scratch to come up with me. To be sure I was all one comme bewitched. I need not, he thought, make such oughts of his coach, for as good gentlewomen as ever were hatched had rode in it before me. I was frightened into the conviction that all Jehu's arguments were just, and so humbly begging pardon of him and his horses, I climbed into the coach, and proceeded very quietly in it to Canterbury, where I now am among a set of very agreeable people, if they did not some times keep me up till past midnight; I however get through it tolerably well, and am upon the whole much improved beyond some accounts you have had of me, for I am become a very egregious blunderer at whist, and am moreover drawn in to display the same happy talent at quadrille. As I never play but among people where I am quite at my ease, and may laugh and talk as much as I like, cards are now become an amusement to me, and I have not once quite fallen asleep over them.

I am much obliged to you for your good wishes about my tar-water regimen, in which I persevere with great resolution, and I really think it has done me some good, for the first effect I perceived was that I could bear the sight of beef and pudding, and the next that I arrantly eat it, and upon the whole I am better, and in tolerable good case, therefore have no right to complain. For the knowledge of what positive health means, I am contented to wait till some future state of being.

As I conclude my judgment must some how or other be wrong when I differ from you; I am heartily ashamed of the abuse I have thrown upon the Odyssey. My only excuse is that I have never seen Mr. Pope's. In justice to Homer I will fully agree n every fine thing you will say about the Iliad. Do you not think there is a dignity in those employments which Virgil gives his departed heroes in Elysium, infinitely superior to Homer's description of the descent of Ulysses, where one meets with nothing but a set of squeaking hungry ghosts that keep raving after victuals as if they had drank tar-water.

You ask me if I have forsworn London, no, nor any other place upon the face of the earth where there is a probability of meeting you, a happiness I much long for, but of which, alas! I have at present very little hopes. I often however please myself with visionary conversations, which make

make at present my most pleasant castle-building. I walk with you, read with you, and dream on very pleasantly till I consult you about something I cannot resolve myself, and then all my amusing speculations vanish. And now I am talking of knotty points ———But the Post is just going, and I have only time to assure you of my being by a thousand obligations, &c. &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Jan.* 3, 1747.

As I do not take you for a *negro*, I will not use you like a *dog*, therefore good lady will of the whisp, that lead stage coaches a wild goose chase nobody knows whither, this Letter comes from Cuddesden to Canterbury, led over hill and dale by the same wandering star, to bring you the good wishes of the season, which keep good I suppose as long as minced pies, though they would perhaps have been somewhat more seasonable some days ago. It was not for want of having you in my thoughts that I did not write punctually on new year's day; I have wished you health, spirits, amusements,

amusements, and any thing in the world that would bring you within reach of me, and to these four wishes you may add as many more as you please, only do not wish instead of being huffed by the coachman, to be driven in a landau and six by a fine gentleman of your own, for the race of gentlemen charioteers I have no very great respect. But as I find you have an affection for fat people, I have a scheme just come into my head that will suit us both exactly, there is but one trifling objection in the way, the man's wife is alive; he is the squire of our parish, and lives within a stone's throw of us, is no slenderer a man than Sir John Falstaff, and really at times has not much less humour, and at no time a less stomach *. He is I suppose not above seventy, and would fall down and worship you the first time you met him. He would certainly marry again, if he had it *in his power*, and has learning enough to court you in Hebrew, I believe: now for the sake of having you my neighbour I will wave my own pretensions, and speak a good word for you. Then shall I meet you in a hot summer day taking an airing with him in your coach upon Shotover hill——But don't be so elated with this promise as to go and pro-

* Probably Sebastian Smith, Esq. of Cuddesden, whose estate came afterwards to his relation Sir J. W. Smith Gardiner, Bart.

claim

claim your good luck at the market cross, for there are people at Canterbury much acquainted with our neighbours. There is one Mr. Lukin who is at Oxford, and who frequently comes over to them, and to whom it be known I scarce ever presume to name you, because I want of all things to have him tell me a great deal about you. This is a folly for which I am perpetually vexed with myself, for whatever subject I want most to talk about I am generally most silent upon, from a sort of shyness, and diffidence, and mauvaise honte, that is quite unaccountable. He supped with us this Christmas, and I knew he had been at Canterbury in the summer, you ran in my head the whole evening, but not a word did I say about you, postponing what I had to say to the next visit, which will probably not take place this six months. Another Kentish man I rode with this year, and talked to him of Miss Hall, and all the Miss Lynches, and all the clever people I could think of at Canterbury, till I believe he wondered at my large acquaintance, but of Miss Carter who introduced me to all this acquaintance not one word. Will you know the honest truth? for it has been at the tip of my pen so long that I see it must come at last. One day when after much caution I was beginning to enquire of a mighty silly man something about Miss Carter, he stopped my mouth with——O yes, I know her very well, she

she is a wit and writes verses—Why should one live in such awe of fools?

To be sure I am in a mighty talkative humour this morning, and must trust wholly to your humour to forgive all the idle things I have been saying. First I have been abusing my neighbours, then myself, and last of all you, my dear Correspondent; I will now go talking of books, as the more harmless subject.

Have you seen Abbé le Blanc's Letters upon the English Nation? I am more pleased with them than with any book of the kind I ever read. They give me both a good opinion of the author and of my own country; though if he had had the good luck to fall into still better company, than I believe he did here, his notions upon some subjects would have been juster. But in general he writes with great good sense, candour, taste, and elegance. Have you any bookseller at Canterbury who is furnished with these new things as they come out? And have you one that deals much in French books, for else it is quite tantalizing you to recommend them. I have been reading some memoirs lately, those of the Sieur de Pontis, an old officer and courtier in the reign of Lewis the XIIIth, that has given me great amusement. All histories of very busy life, read with peculiar agreeableness in a quiet calm retirement.

There

There is a new Canto of Spenser's Fairy Queen, lately come out, that I think I can be sure you will like, for I flatter myself our tastes in some things are alike. You will say that is not at all of a piece with the wretched cowardice I exprest on t'other side the leaf, but you would easily pardon me could I give you a detail of the persecutions I have most unjustly undergone sur le chapitre du bel esprit. Now when for some years I have been going through a strict course of plain work, spinning, poultry feeding, quacking, and fifty more such harmless domestic exercises, to purge myself from such imputations, to see myself on the brink of being infected again would make any body tremble. Yet would I venture upon this utmost peril, would my kind stars but happily allow me to be near you, we would then together laugh over all these ridiculous notions, both of my own and other peoples, or talk over more seriously a thousand other subjects, in which hour after hour would pass by unperceived, yet not unimproved.

I ought not to complain of my stars as unkind just now, for we have at present a companion who spends a fortnight with us, and who is as perfectly agreeable as the highest idea your imagination can form. You must certainly often have heard of the Bishop of Glocester*, for nobody has a more

* This character sufficiently marks Dr. Benson as the Bishop here spoken of.

general

general acquaintance, but perhaps you may only have heard of him in his more serious public character, what he is among a set of friends is beyond all description; the ease, the cheerfulness, the wit, the good-nature, the humour, the infinite variety of entertainment, that make it impossible while he is in any place for any thing but down right ill health, or misery, to be unhappy.

When your next Letter comes it will find us in perfect solitude, for so we are to spend the next three weeks. Whenever you can steal an hour from your more cheerful amusements, it will be most charitably bestowed, dear Miss Carter, on, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Jan.* 25, 1747.

I INTENDED to have been before-hand with you, dear Miss Talbot, in a thousand good wishes, and should certainly have done it, if a perpetual hurry of engagements had not deprived me of every leisure moment. I was in hopes last week would have put an end to them, but positively there is no end to eating, drinking, and playing cards, and people seem to me to have formed a

conspiracy to kill one another for want of sleep; so I have e'en catched up my pen, and am resolved to write to you before I have quite forgot how to handle such a thing. The use of the twenty-four letters indeed I stand a tolerable chance to remember, by the assistance of Dr. Potter *, who has taught me your method of spelling, and as your's it is an entertainment that gives me peculiar delight. The Dr. showed me a word with which you had puzzled him, and nothing could equal my impatience to find it out, but my stupidity in not being able to do it, which would have been the case to this instant, if Miss Hall, provoked at my extreme dullness, and afraid I should bring myself into a consumption by severe study, told me she believed I should never find it out till I turned *Jew*. And now I am speaking of Dr. Potter, I must make honourable mention of Mr. Hynd, to whom I am greatly obliged, for he talked to me of you. I can easily conceive the difficulty you complain of, by myself, for there is an unaccountable something that checks me whenever I am going to enquire after you, and if ever I do venture to speak, I utter so many foolish things, that I am afraid people will think it a disgrace to you to be ac-

* Prebendary, and after Dean, of Canterbury, eldest son to Archbishop Potter.

quainted

quainted with any thing so blundering and awkward. However Mr. Hynd began first, and I believe I should have got courage enough to hold up the conversation, when most unluckily somebody at t'other side of the table exhibited a marvellous story about five rats, which drew the attention of my gentleman, and he left me to enjoy my contemplations about you, and finish the discourse by myself; only think how provoked I was to see you rivalled by five rats! To be sure the man looked with as much earnestness, and seemed as deeply interested in the narrative as if he had been a cat.

This Letter has been begun this long time, and I have not been able to proceed a step further. 'Tis a most vexatious thing to be perplexed for want of time, and to find oneself always in an uproar of business. Besides all my other important engagements, I have been working my eyes out in making shirts for my brother; I want mightily to reform the world in this particular, and therefore, am resolved when I come into your neighbourhood, and am blessed with a family of boys, they shall all learn to make their own shirts. I hope you will not fail to promote my interest with the curiosity of a lover you have provided for me, by giving him a faithful recital of this my notable resolution.

I could

I could never have imagined it possible I should have had more philosophy than you, and yet by your own account I find I have. I can by no means approve the frights and terrors you seem to be under sur le sujet du bel esprit, nor do I think there is any deference due either to the ignorance of trifling heads, or the perverseness of worthless hearts, which will always find something or other to exercise their folly or ill-nature about. I should not, I think, therefore, put myself to the trouble of unnecessary cautions: enfin je vais toujours mon train, and have always found that endeavouring to acquire a tolerable degree of common sense has amply repaid me for any thing I may have suffered in the article of learning or wit, and thus have borne with great tranquillity the scandle of absurdities I never committed, and of nonsense that I never wrote.

The bell rings for church, so I must quit you, though not without expressing the extreme pleasure I feel from the recollection of this day six years *; a day that gave birth to such a set of ideas as have formed some of the most agreeable moments I have ever met with from that time to this, in which I have the happiness, &c.

* When the two ladies first saw each other.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Feb.* 9, 1747.

This is the last Letter dear Miss Carter, that I am likely for some months to date from this most favourite place. In two days we set off for London, but as I believe you will scarce be more amused with the common chit-chat of that idle place than with the famous and delectable history of the five rats, I rather chuse to write to you from here in some leisure, than from Piccadilly in a hurry. Not but you shall have some London Letters if you think them worth writing for. Now I talk of Letters, I must really condole with you for missing a pleasure that has been to me a very high one this winter, for by understanding Pliny in the original you are scarce the better for a most elegant and beautiful translation of his Letters * that we have been reading with great delight. Well, to be sure, a faithful and elegant translator is a character of the highest virtue in the literary republic. It implies public spirit the most void of ostentation; a kind regard for the illiterate; a love of our native country, shown by enriching its language with va-

* Probably Melmoth's.

luable

luable books; a just regard for merit of whatever country, by placing the merit of some valuable foreigners in the truest and fairest light; a care, a judgment, and exactness that original writings do not require, and some degree of humility in scarce aspiring to the name of an author. But how few of those heroes and heroines are there! The common herd of translators are mere murderers.

But was ever so original an author as Mr. Cibber? Have not you read him? Have not you admired—have not you wondered—have not you laughed—have not you been peevish? Have not you upon the whole been vastly entertained? Poor Cicero! could he but look out of his urn, and see his darling glory traduced by an upstart modern—and of all moderns by ———; could one but make him comprehend the kind of character, show him some of the Odes, and give him at once all the ideas annexed to the name of Colley Cibber! And yet this odd mortal writes in a great many places with much sense and truth, and shows a kind of tenderness and fondness for the amiable parts of Cæsar's character that one cannot help being a little touched with.

I hope you are still going on without intermission, eating, drinking, and playing at cards at Canterbury, and have no dependance upon this wretched weather, nor leisure so much as to mind it.

it. Poor we are here in the midst of driving snow and whistling winds, and amongst it all must we set out to-morrow.

Do not be uneasy about our journey, for since writing the above it is wisely determined we shall not think of attempting it till the weather is less hideous.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *March*, 20, 1747.

Good-morrow, dear Miss Talbot, I must interrupt your dreams, for the only leisure moments I have are when people are asleep. I hope you are by this time safe in London without being petrified upon the road. I was much rejoiced to find the latter part of your Letter contradict the first resolution, which really made me shudder, as well inured as I am to all kinds of weather. But apprehensive as I was about your journey, I did not at all need your good wishes that I might be insensible to the inclemency of the sky, for I should be very sorry to lose such a pleasing set of horrors; whistling winds and driving snows I consider as the proper and becoming ornaments of winter, and I cannot

not help looking upon a fine day in that season with some kind of dislike as a very unnatural thing. I am extremely delighted with a buzzard, whom I have watched all this winter, and who seems to be of the same taste with myself. Whenever it looks clear and shining the creature sits mighty snug and stupid upon his perch, but the moment the sky begins to lour he descends, claps his wings, and wanders about the garden with a most complete enjoyment of the tempest. I should certainly have pursued the method of this my fellow-creature in rambling up and down the face of the earth in the last blowing snowy weather, but on my talking one evening something about walking out, there was as much astonishment and outcry in the family as if I had seriously told them I was going to hang myself; and so to avoid the scandal of having absolutely lost my senses I was obliged to content myself with quietly setting by the fire-side, and listening to the storm at a distance.

Was you ever electrified? We have an itinerant philosopher here, who knocks people down for the moderate consideration of sixpence, and men, women, and children are electrified out of their senses. This is at present the universal topic of discourse. The fine ladies forget their cards and scandal to talk of the effects of electricity. The squires flock out of the villages to bring themselves

and their dogs to be electrified; and the very boys and girls in the streets break their teeth with long hard words in describing the wonders of *tricity*. For fear, however, that the mere love of philosophy should not gain him a sufficient number of spectators, this High Dutch conjuror is likewise possessed of a curious puppet-show, where I suppose the whole system of electricity is exhibited by Punch, who I believe would explain it just as well as any body else, for all the philosophers seem marvellously perplexed on this subject. But however ignorant people may be with regard to particulars, do not the experiments in general seem strongly to prove the favourite ethereal fire of the ancients and the Bishop of Cloyne *? Perhaps not only in this but in most other instances, all the discoveries of the moderns tend only to convince one of the good sense and true philosophy of the ancients, and to prove what they have asserted †.

I want much to know your opinion of the new play, and till then shall suspend my curiosity of seeing it. The great applause it has met with in this town is no proof of its merit, if one is to form any judgment of the taste of the town from the

* Bishop Berkley.

† Goguet's celebrated work "L'Origine des Loix, des Arts, et des Sciences," &c. tending to prove this seeming paradox, was not published till 1758.

encourage-

encouragement it has given to the stupid ridiculous favour of Miss ——. To be sure there are some seasons when the English seem to be arrantly bewitched, for I think one can no otherwise account for those strange distortions that one sometimes observes in the natural good sense of the nation.

After railing at the nonsense of other people, you will perhaps think 'tis with a very ill grace that I have the assurance to enclose you some of my own *. By way of excuse, I recollect that you agree with me in expressing great veneration for an owl, and as this has flown about the earth much more than I ever intended it should, it would be a very ungrateful owl not to pay his compliments to you. I have the pleasure of being serenaded every night by a concert of these Athenian singing birds from the cathedral that overlooks my window. To be sure you will think one great drift of this Letter was to assure you of my singular affection for owls and buzzards.

I am very glad Pliny appears so well in an English dress, for he is one of my favourite writers. The translation of his Letters must certainly be a very difficult task. The Panegyric, as it is a panegyric, and a very long one, I never read, nor I

* The "Ode to Wisdom," p. 396 of the quarto edition.

believe ever shall, unless you tell me it much deserves it.

I gladly claim your promise of London Letters, which will probably find me here, though the fine weather strongly invites me to my morning walks at Deal; for as to walking here, 'tis an impracticable scheme, unless in speculation through a telescope. Adieu, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

I owe you so many thanks, dear Miss Carter, for your owl, that it is high time I should begin to return them, but indeed I am not in spirits for writing. There is nothing so dismal as this hateful town, when one is not in a situation to enjoy any of its amusements, and only feels one is not in a country solitude by having no leisure to enjoy one's own thoughts, nor any pleasant view or beautiful object to look upon. It seems as if when we are in reach of society, we ought to keep up some connection with it, but I know not how day passes after day, and still I do nothing but nurse a cold by the fire-side, and see such miserable low spirits in one of my best friends, that my

own

own are affected by it to a degree I cannot express. Alas, why do I indulge the weakness of telling you this, when it will only give you an unnecessary pain? We ought not to do this indeed, for poor fellow-travellers as we all are through very indifferent roads, methinks all we have to do is to keep up the cheerfulness of the journey as well as we can. What could possess me to sit down, deep in the spleen as I am, to write to you? Go back into my drawer, foolish paper, and lie there till I am in a gayer humour.

Upon second thoughts I will send this dismal fragment by this Post, for the sake of sending you, the Speech enclosed, which you will be as much charmed with as I was with your owl; more it is not possible to be. I did not hear it, for a cold prevented me from attending, excepting two days at the very first. I did not indeed deserve the solemn serious pleasure, for when I did go, in spite of all the fine sentiments I writ you in the summer, I went too much like my sister triflers, as to a public place, the finest and best dressed assembly one could go to. Adieu! I am interrupted.

Mrs.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *March* 30, 1747.

I am extremely obliged to you, my dear Miss Talbot, for the Speech you were so good as to send me, which I read with the highest imaginable delight. It is certainly worthy a Greek or a Roman genius, and in this has the superiority, as it charms one from the mere force of truth and good sense, and borrows very little help from the ornaments of rhetoric and oratory.

I hope by this time the enlivening beams of a warm sunshine have proved a more effectual remedy for your cold than nursing it by a dull fire. It will give me real joy to hear you are relieved from the situation you describe in your last, for one can hardly conceive any thing more melancholy. There are very few real calamities in the world, but of those few, none is more affecting than the ill health of one's friends, nor more absolutely out of the power of reason to relieve.

I am very sorry to hear the fine sentiments that attended you in the quiet solitude of the country, had such an aversion to noise and hurry, that they would not accompany you to London; however, I hope you will find them very safe at your return, and

and they are really very well worth going back for.

We have got the Suspicious Husband here, which is the most notable performance I have ever met with, where nobody talks and every body acts. Upon the whole, I like it very well, though it is extremely the fashion here to call it a very dull thing, and very unnatural, because it has very little wit. Now, as Comedy is a representation of common life, and as one meets with nobody but what talks wit, to be sure the objection is extremely well grounded!

As nonsense is often a good remedy for the spleen, I am going to tell you a nonsensical story. I remember you was once charmed with the figure of a quiet, deliberate, lank-haired puritan youth, whom I mentioned to you, but my present object is one of a totally different character, whose wig is always in an uproar, his cloaths hung upon every lock and bolt by the extreme trepidation of his pace, and who runs over every body he meets in his way. Last night, about ten o'clock, we were all startled by a most outrageous ringing at the door, which proved a servant of the aforesaid Orlando, with a Letter, to which he must have an answer, before an answer could possibly be given; but I thought I might as well read the Letter first, which was no other than an arrant billet doux, in which he was

resolved,

resolved, as somebody says in Moliere, to " prendre le Roman par la queue, et débuter par la mariage." As the man had never signified his intention before, to be sure the demand was somewhat abrupt and peremptory; however, I had a *no* extremely at his service, but would not detain his emissary, who, I concluded, was to gallop on without loss of time to Deal, to ask my father's consent, and from thence to London, for the approbation of my uncle. The next morning, before any soul was up, he returned with the same violence of ringing, and carried back my answer to his master, whom I expect every day to come and fly away with me in a chaise and one, unless he should meet with somebody in his way, and be married upon the road. I have told you this foolish ridiculous story, as it diverted myself, but beg you will not mention it, as I have not, to any one else.

I beg you will let me hear from you very soon, for I am so impatient that I shall want it long before it can arrive. I have been called away ten times, and shall be *twinked* if I do not leave you after having assured you, &c. &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *April* 18, 1747.

I may e'en as well write to you now, dear Miss Carter, as stay longer, for I see 'tis in vain to wait, till I have made some such conquest as you boast of in your last, and yet really 'tis but insipid to answer you without. But you are a fine gay lady, and go flaunting about all Canterbury, while I in gay London have sat as soberly by my fire-side for these last five weeks, as if I had been five hundred miles off. I approve much of your refusing a chaise and one, because I think it would scarce have brought you hither, but the first fine man in a fashionable postchaise, or phaeton, that offers to run away with you to London before the month of June, or to Oxford in any of the following months, I insist upon it that you drop him the civilest curtsie you can, and say very graciously, Yes if you please, good Sir. Or if you are so inexorably disposed, pray exhort some fine Kentish man to come and run away with me. Suppose you send off your discarded lover, all in a hurry, with a pillion behind him; that certainly is the cleverest scheme of the two, for I am convinced if you were in town, we should have much less acquaintance than we have now. There is a sort of enchant-

ment

ment in the air I believe, that makes people avoid each other the moment they are in this vile place, who have been wishing above all things to meet before: for here there is no such thing as friendship, society, or rational conversation. I really am quite out of humour with it. Some of the happiest hours of one's life are those sure which are spent with agreeable conversible friends, in all the ease and freedom of unreserved discourse; discourse not of trifles and visits, actors and drums, but on such subjects as are fit to employ the attention of a reasonable creature*, or of such as are at least amusing and engaging. But this sort of society seems to be gone out of the world. In the country we cannot have it, because the people are not there; and here we cannot have it because every body is engaged every day in some public place. A woman of excellent sense, and one of the quietest sort, insisted upon it the other night that I should go with her to the play, for the sake of having more of her company than I could possibly enjoy in any other way; well, I went, and saw Mr. Gar-

* Sermo oritur, non de villis domibusve alienis;
Nec malè pecte Lepos saltet; sed quod magis ad nos
Pertinet, & nescire malum est, agitamus.—Hor. II. Sat. vi.

There is no reason to suppose that Miss Talbot was conversant with Horace, and such exact coincidences in moral opinions at so great a distance of time are very curious.

rick

rick act in his farce, and indeed it was worth seeing, as something so original, so natural, that it is not to be imaged without seeing. This play, and one oratorio, are the sum of the public places I have been at, unless you will add two very moderate drums, and one concert. Those oratorios of Handel's are certainly (next to the *hooting of owls*) the most solemnly striking music one can hear. I am sure you must be fond of them, even I am who have no ear for music, and no skill in it. In this last oratorio he has literally introduced guns, and they have a good effect.

I do not know what is the subject of town talk at present, nothing very remarkable I fancy. Affairs in Flanders seem to go on but indifferently, difficulties, want of money, want of spirit in the Dutch, are things one hears mentioned, but mentioned discreetly. At home I much fear there is a strong party spirit rising, that will be very troublesome next year. However, the victory of Culloden has been very loyally commemorated, and yet very quietly. Adieu! fair inexorable, I wish you may have a thousand lovers, that you may send me descriptions of them all. As for me, I can think of nothing to describe in the world at this moment, except it be myself, and the best description I can give of myself at this time is, that I am, &c.

P. S.

P. S. This poor Letter has lain folded in my drawer these five days, impatient as it must have been, had it any taste, to leave this vile town, and wait upon you. In the mean time there has been a great joy on account of the Stadtholder, great sorrow on account of Fort St. George. At present both joy and sorrow have talked themselves asleep, and as for me, of course I have been asleep, or else I should have dispatched away my Letter while the news was fresh—

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *May* 14, 1747.

I SHOULD long ago have done myself the pleasure of writing to you, dear Miss Talbot, but have been in a constant hurry of one sort or other ever since I received your's. No doubt you have a great curiosity to know what I have been about, so I shall proceed to inform you, as one kind of nothingness is as good as another. In the first place, I have been out of the world somewhere, at an infinite distance from people and things, in the country, where I spent, by vulgar computation of time, a week, but in my own a year.

year. To be sure I was in a house very pleasantly situated, and the hogs grunted, and the pigs squeaked, the toads croaked, and all was mighty rural and pretty. Besides, I was really in a very agreeable family, and was carried there by very agreeable friends; and yet whatever possessed me, I took it into my head to be extremely restless and uneasy. It seemed to be a place from which I could not very conveniently run away, and so fancied myself in the condition of some unfortunate damsel in a romance, confined to an enchanted palace, and I had absolutely lost all idea of my being in any European country.—At last I returned to Canterbury, to my great joy, and ever since, between head-aches and fluttering up and down upon the face of the earth for joy, that I was once more among men, women, and children, I have had little leisure for writing.

I hope you have by this time perfectly recovered your cold. I had the pleasure of hearing you was walking in the Park. After all there is but little got by nursing one's complaints over a fire, and since the strictest sobriety, and the most quiet see-saw life will not secure one from head-aches and fevers, one may as well sometimes have the pleasure of playing the rake, and doing like other folks. In pursuance of this doctrine I ventured last week to the assembly, which, to volatile, dissipated people like

like me, is a very high entertainment. There one is not confined to any particular person, or method of discourse, but may in a few hours run through the whole circle of human conversation. Enfin c'est un peu de folie, et un peu de sagesse, mêlé de la maniére du monde la plus agréable. To be sure I might just as well have said this in English, but I was thinking of a French officer who was there, and who was very entertaining. Miss Hall and I shared him by way of partner, and between us both we did not suffer him to sit down a single dance, which perhaps you may think somewhat unmerciful; but surely there is no need of scruple about a Frenchman, a species of creature composed entirely of air and fire, with no one principle of lassitude in it. Besides if you had killed him, the man seemed so perfectly sensible of the extreme honour it would have done him, that it would have seemed cruel to deny him the satisfaction of verifying his fine speeches.

What effect had last Sunday's storm with you in London; we had only moderate thunder and lightning here, with fine showers; the effects of it at Deal were terrible. There was a ball of fire towards the North-west, which burst, and has burnt and wounded four people in a sad manner*. I

* This is the storm mentioned in Mrs. Carter's Memoirs, p. 295, 4to.

had

had a Letter from my sister, who saw it fall, it was accompanied by a prodigious noise, and a hail storm, such as has not been known these forty years, it lay above an hour in heaps upon the ground.

I propose to myself much pleasure in reading *Melancholy*, because I fancy, though I cannot tell why, that it is written by Dr. Akenside. Your next Letter I hope will find me at Deal. I am to set out to-morrow, and mean to compose myself there for the rest of the summer. Whenever I meet with any intelligence that has not got into the public papers you shall have it, though I fear there is no great hopes of agreeable news. All happiness attend you; I am going to take leave of a thousand people, which is the silliest, awkward thing I know, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *May* 16, 1747.

One cannot hear good news too often, and therefore, dear Miss Carter, you will certainly forgive me though you should have heard, before this reaches you, all I have to tell. That Admiral Anson,

Anson, and with him Admiral Warren *, fell in with the French fleet near Brest, which was going part to the Indies, and part to Canada, and has taken six men of war, besides several merchant ships and transports, to the value of a million and half. His ships are in pursuit of the rest. The French Admiral is killed, and on our side Captain Grenville.

I do not pretend this to be any sort of answer to your's, which I received with great delight yesterday. Your regard for the French officer, who engrossed so much of your thoughts since the assembly, will not I hope make this news disagreeable to you. Poor man! he is safe out of the way of cannon balls, were he but as secure from darts and arrows and indefatigable dancers. 'Tis a terrible alliance you and Miss Hall have made together against him, let the misfortunes of his countrymen give you some compassion towards him, and may we soon have such news from Flanders, as shall almost make it look like an insult only to smile upon him—Adieu! très chere—

* This signal victory was gained May 3, 1748, off Cape Finisterre.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *June* 19, 1747.

At last, my dear Miss Carter, I am got back to a place where I can have my thoughts enough about me to write a reasonable sort of Letter. I need not tell you I am sure that all the varied scenes I have quitted could not possibly efface you from my mind, I thought of both you and of the Letters * I owed you, but knowing your goodness, I hoped you would make excuses for me, though I made none for myself, and such is the ingratitude of the world, I am sorry to say, that you good-natured people oftenest have your patience tried. The plan of your operations for next spring has amused me with a thousand delightful dreams, (for the most plausible projects in this world at half a year's distance are no better) and I want extremely to be informed of all particulars. When, where, and with whom? I am full of schemes, and full of hopes, and should write myself into high spirits, if I were to indulge my imagination a little upon a subject it is so fond of. But I have learnt that the golden mean, so eligible in every thing else, is in

* The Letters alluded to are missing.

matter of schemes and hopes of all things most to be avoided. If we confine them to the present scene, and do not suffer them to plan further than the next day or hour, they may be just enough. If we would extend them further, and not be lost in disappointments and delusions, they must extend into a distant futurity beyond the bounds of time.

And so to return from the future to the past, and from the clouds to London. The latter part of my time there past very agreeably, the madness after public diversions abated, at least among my own set of friends, and society grew rational and cheerful. We made parties out of town, walked in Kensington gardens, had some charming concerts in a private set of only forty or fifty, (shall you like to go to one of them next spring?) spent an evening at Vauxhall, and some still pleasanter evenings and mornings of mere friendly chat, gave, as Sir Philip Sidney says, "new feathers to the wings of time," and truly it flew fast enough. I have now taken leave of those vanities and follies which I was beginning to be well enough pleased with, and hope, in three or four months time, I shall inure myself to reading and working at least an hour or two in a day. You know experimentally the progress one makes from a gay town lady to a good contented country housewife. First

the

the tragedy princess in an august melancholy (such as you was in your week's imprisonment in your enchanted castle) and then the pastoral nymph, (my present state) lolling on a green bank, among roses and honeysuckles, and singing sonnets to the zephyrs, idle indeed, but perfectly rural. Adieu! I had rather omit a few idle sentences, than make you pay a double Letter, should franking be disallowed before this reaches you*.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Aug.* 28, 1747.

Ought I to begin my answer† to you just now or not, dear Miss Carter? It is most certain I have nothing to do at this moment that s either better, or more agreeable; but then I am in a dull indolent humour, and rather more inclined to be lulled asleep by the rustling of the leaves, and waving of the elms under whose shade I sit, than to write any thing that may keep either you

* Which it was, for the Letter, though franked by the Bishop, has the Post-office mark of three pence, from Oxford to Deal.

† The Letter to which this is the reply is wanting.

or me awake. And yet that word *write* has roused me a little, by putting me in mind of your enquiry. Dear Miss Carter, how can you ask me what I write? What should I but chit-chat Letters, and housewifely receipts. I was wondering what strange thing you could possibly have shewed for mine, and not a little pleased to find you bit so finely with what I dare say wanted nothing but the charm of novelty to recommend it. V. S^a. mi fa troppo honore. While I admire every degree of genius in others, I live on myself in a mighty John Trot way, and while I am plodding on day after day in a round of useful employments, very seldom find time to amuse myself with the sportings of fancy: If ever we meet (Sia presto il giorno) you will do me good, and put some life and spirit into me, which really I want. Oh dear how we would walk, and how we would talk! for I am not absolutely stupid neither, but can enjoy with high taste any kind of book, or landscape, or fine day, or conversation, properly so called.

Did you ever read, or I ever mention to you a book that came out about seven years ago, called Matho, or Cosmotheoria Puerilis? I have lately read it over for the second time, by which means I am come to understand about one third of it, but that little fills me with ideas that I would not exchange for any others, and would engage me to read

read it a third or a fourth time could I read it with you. Who knows but I may? As learned as the book is, it cannot possibly tempt one to be vain, since the most difficult things in it, are all supposed level to the capacity of a mere school-boy, the second person in the dialogue, whose character, excepting in that particular, is charmingly kept up.

I was much diverted with the Canterbury lampoon, and pity the subjects of it as much as the man in Lucretius pities those he sees shipwrecked, while he rejoices at being safe on land *. The good opinion of all our fellow-creatures, and the satisfaction of feeling ourselves in good humour with them, is so valuable, as to make even the nonsensical things which are said by envy and stupidity itself, some allay to the joy of being esteemed and commended by the wiser and better half of the world. A strong reason for complying in all harmless instances with the most vulgar prejudices. You see you have sunk yourself extremely in my opinion by not knowing how to distinguish between wheelbarrows and dumplings, however I think your reputation there may be easily retrieved: send to me for some receipts, make some excellent

* Alluding to the beautiful and well known passage, Suave mari magno, &c.

puddings,

puddings, invite your lampooners, and you will effectually stop their mouths.

This was begun the 4th, and lo, it is now the 28th; I forgot my Letter poor thing in a drawer, being prevented finishing it the day it was begun; while the careless writer has been indulging herself at Oxford, with all the gaieties of a race week, which I think I never entered into with better spirits than this year, though the excessive heat of the weather made me almost entirely resist the temptation of dancing. To make me amends for this self-denial, I have been entertained with a vast deal of most excellent music, and such as inspired the most pleasing ideas. Go on and prosper in the science of the harpsichord. But pray tell me how is it possible for people to be passionately fond of music, and especially of oratorio music, and yet to be in their lives and manners unharmonious and disorderly? Does this softening power of music, and this attention to the noblest words and sentiments (to Milton's Morning Hymn for instance which was one of the pieces I heard) does it do no good at all, or does it do some at least for the present hour, though not enough to resist strong inclinations, and the torrent of example? I wish you would write me a long dissertation on this subject, for I want much to know what to think about it. It is impossible I think

think to partake of a reasonable pleasure, a gay happy hour with people who at that time appear quite amiable, and not wish that they may always be in an equally happy frame of mind; and if a rational love of music can contribute to this, one must see it with delight; but when one finds it cannot do every thing, one is apt to suspect it cannot do any thing. Alas! it is too true, that one of the most profligate poor wretches I know, and the most lost and insensible to all serious consideration, is the most constant frequenter of all oratorios. How can one account for this? For it is not fashion that leads him there, but inclination.

I hope you enjoy this unusual continuance of most delightful weather as highly as I do. If it does no harm to the country, I shall be extremely glad to find the truth of what I am told Dr. Hales* foretells from observations he has made partly from the weather-glass; that it will last till Michaelmas.

I shall be extremely obliged to you if you will answer my Letter according to its earliest date, and not follow my bad example, but my good intention, and let me hear from you very soon; and

* Minister of Teddington, near Hampton Court. A great natural philosopher, the inventor of ventilators, and a great botanist, he died 1761, aged 84.

when

when you write pray say how you do, and what is become of your violent head-aches. Adieu!

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Sept.* 15, 1747.

DEAR MISS TALBOT,

I HAD just lost all patience, and was going to make an enquiry after you, when your's arrived, and I must beg for the future, when you are prevented finishing a Letter, you will always send off the beginning, that if it be but a fragment I may at least have the satisfaction of knowing you are alive and well, instead of being fretting myself with apprehensions that you are sick abed, while you are enjoying all the gaieties of a race week.

I am delighted to hear you talk with so much pleasure about music: but am very ill qualified to write dissertations. I labour under the same difficulties on that subject with you, and have often been extremely shocked to observe the most profligate worthless people so very fond of it. And yet this is not a fair argument against its general usefulness; perhaps too even to these unhappy persons

persons it may be of service and give them some minutes of virtue, which they had never known without its aid. One has often the mortification of seeing a fondness not only for music, but for all the fine arts, united with a dissipated head and a wicked heart, and I scarcely know a more melancholy reflection. This strange monstrous composition seems to owe its rise to the present miserable defective scheme of education.

I congratulate you on the joy you express in this fine weather, for my own part I do not know whether I have most pleasure or vexation about it: for the poor old sexton who used to rouse me to my morning walks is grown blind, and I am at least half the week too stupidly sleepy to wake myself. You cannot think how it provokes me to to lie muzzing in stuff and feathers, while the whole creation invites me abroad. To allay my affliction in some measure for this disappointment, I had yesterday the good fortune to pick up a rose, which was an unexpected prize at this time of the year, and it is not to be thought what delight I have in it. O dear how I kiss and talk to it, and tell it stories, all one like a Christian. But roses, alas! will fade, and this fair transient object of my admiration * must soon wither into dust, and I shall have nothing left for my entertainment but to mora-

* ————nimium breves
Flores amœnæ—rosæ. Hor.

lize

lize on its decay, and——but what business have I to moralize, and make grave dull reflections? This would be quite out of character, for besides the compliments paid me in the lampoon which I told you of in my last; I am stiled the *grinning philosopher*. I am much better pleased with this, than if they had made an Heraclitus of me.

I don't know what you mean by suspecting my good housewifery, when I think myself so notable a person, as you must certainly, acknowledge, if you could see me with uncommon contrivance joining nineteen heterogeneous pieces together to make a cap, to say nothing of my labouring on in the beaten track through whole dozens of shirts and shifts. As to the articles of puddings, I wish I could send you one piping hot to Cuddesden, as a specimen of my abilities in the science of puddings. One would think you had a mind to insult me upon a misfortune that happened to me some fifteen years ago, when I produced a pudding of a new invention, so over-charged with pepper and brandy that it put the whole family in a flame. The children all set up their little throats against Greek and Latin, and I found this unlucky event was like to prove my everlasting disgrace, for they made a perfect æra of it, and every remarkable thing that was quoted for a month after, was always sure to happen on the

the same day " *my sister made the brandy pudding.*" So to stop their clamour, I happily applied myself to the forming a special good sweet cake, with such success, that the former mishap was forgot, and I was employed to make every christening cake that happened in the family ever after. And though I say it, that should not say it, several grave notable gentlewomen of unquestionable good housewifery have applied to me for the receipt. I hope you will not infer from my story that I am fond of brandy, for I put it in out of pure good management to save milk.

I have never read Matho, though I have had a strong desire ever since you recommended it. I have lately been improving myself by a system of false philosophy, which I took the pains of reading through, for no other reason than because it was wrote by a lady, Madame de Chatelet. She is in many instances a strong opponent to Sir Isaac Newton, and very deep in the perplexities of Mr. Leibnitz. However there are a great many good things in the book wherever a fondness for hypothesis, and the authority of Mr. Leibnitz does not over-rule the plainest discoveries of common sense. In many instances it is not to be wondered at that one meets great confusion of argument upon these subjects. For after all, when one has examined the very best system of natural philosophy, there

there remain so many difficulties about the properties of matter that it is not very surprizing that some people have taken it into their heads to deny the actual existence of any such thing.

I am much obliged by your enquiries about my head, it is much better than it was last summer. A man in this town has received a Letter from his son who was in Bergen-op-Zoom when it was taken; this sad news came yesterday by a vessel from Flushing, the young man having saved himself by swimming when the French entered the town; the father refuses to shew the Letter, so we are afraid it contains something worse than the general account which is bad enough, for the garrison were all put to death *. My sister desires her best respects to you, she has been out to certify the truth of the above melancholy intelligence. Pray write soon, &c.

* This was not the case. The town was taken by storm on the 16th of September, but the garrison were made prisoners of war. There is evidently a mistake in the date of this Letter.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Oct.* 26, 1747.

Would you believe, dear Miss Carter, and yet it is most certainly true, that if there were to be an act of parliament passed this sessions obliging me under high penalties to write to you once a fortnight, it would fill me with great gratitude to his Majesty and the members. I confess this does not seem very likely, considering how long your last Letter has lain by me unanswered, but I really do wish I had some necessity which obliged me to indulge myself in what is so much my inclination, and which I have only deferred to follow other employments that seemed to call for more immediate dispatch because I liked them less. If you would but be a little pointilleuse now, and ready to take offence at these my uncivil scruples of conscience—you would not be what you are, and consequently I should not care so much about you.

My time has been employed since I wrote last, as most people's is at this fine season, in rambling about as far as my own or my horse's feet would carry me. This filled my mornings; my afternoons are short, and I as useless a mortal as any that saunters on the face of the earth, and yet have as many

many little impertinent avocations that call me off from every employment I could be fond of; and I feel the shortness of time most uneasily, certainly for no other reason than because I do not know how to make the best use of what I have, but cut it out into sippets in the strangest way you can imagine. What should I do if I was engaged in any serious business? I have but three creatures in the world over whom I have a right to exercise any government, a foolish dog, a restive horse, and a perverse gardener, who has lately been put under my direction. In this my small dominion I meet with as many difficulties as ever indolent monarch did. The dog uncontrouled is for ever running after sheep, or jumping upon me with dirty paws; the horse will by no possible persuasion go over the same ground twice; and the gardener is demolishing my beds of flowers, which I meant to have had enlarged. Indeed you are not so much to be pitied that your old man can call you up no longer, for it is much better to sleep with a quiet conscience in an easy bed, than to be destressed with all these cares that wait upon people in authority. I hope at least these weighty employments will keep me in a state of activity all the winter, and that I may discharge them as I ought; I have all these years been studying profoundly the lives of politicians and heroes. I can tell you 'tis a danger-

ous

ous study, and if much care is not taken, reading a great deal of history may be as likely to pervert the mind as living in the world. One may grow to admire ambition and revenge as shining qualities, to approve cruelty and deceit as prudence, and to think the affairs of this world very important things, and riches, honours, and fame, very worthy of pursuit; being upon one's guard is, however, all that is necessary. A very little reflection, so as one has it but at hand, serves to show the paltriness and folly of all that these people think wise, great, and illustrious.

For all these fine notions I cannot help being a little in love with a Duke de Guise *, whose Memoirs we have just been reading, who most unnecessarily engaged himself amongst a most dreadful crew at Naples, prompted merely by romantic ideas of glory, and a fine scheme he had formed of freeing these wretches from the Spanish tyranny, and making of them an illustrious republic. In such charming theories people never consider

* Henry II. Duke of Guise, son of Charles, and grandson of Henry, who was murdered at Blois in 1586. He entered Naples in 1647, soon after the death of Massaniello, and early in the following year was taken prisoner and sent into Spain. After he was released he made another attempt upon Naples in 1654, and died in 1664. He had all the striking and popular qualities of a complete knight-errant.

what

what kind of tools they are to work with, or what human nature is even in themselves. He certainly prevented many cruelties, and did a great deal of good in reducing that wild mob (first raised by Massaniello) into some kind of order and under some government. What provokes me is, that when by the treachery of some of those he was engaged with, his whole design was ruined, and himself thrown into prison, he gave it over with all the ease and unconcern of a gay Frenchman. He was, like you, of Democritus's school, and through the whole of his history intermixes such strokes of humour in describing of oddities that naturally come in his way, that his book is, I think, one of the most entertaining I ever read. After all, the dignity of human nature, rightly understood, is so great, that for a man to step out of his path of duty, be it ever so retired, merely for the sake of fame, is quite as much beneath him as it would be for a man of quality to step out of his place in a theatre, and go to perform some part on the stage which he felt himself qualified to appear in gracefully and with applause; an applause better neglected than gained. Indeed such are the sorry actors on this world's busy scene, that for the most part it is but a just kind of pride to avoid having any thing to do with them. We are reading now the Life of another French hero, the famous

mous Duke d'Epernon *, who seems, upon the whole, to have been a man of worth and honour; but many a scuffle must worth and honour go through if they are to be made consistent with fortune and greatness. The talking of heroes' lives, there is another very different one come out, which I have been greatly pleased with, though I fancy in the world it will be much despised—the Life of good Colonel Gardiner †, who lived with as much true and honourable courage as he died.

You see I am writing you two Letters, which I hope you will allow to be making you some amends for my former idleness. I will not give you any more extracts out of musty old French histories, but will wholly fill this sheet with two very interesting subjects, yourself and myself. Do you know that these two very pretty selves are now within a few months of meeting, and of spending many a merry hour together. The thought pleases me

* One of the favourites (but far the most eminent and respectable of them) of that worthless and contemptible monarch Henry III. He was disgraced by Louis XIII. and died in 1642, aged 88 years.

† Col. Gardiner was killed at the battle of Preston-Pans in 1745. The remarkable circumstances attending his *conversion* and death are well known, and perhaps deserving of more attention than they have met with.

most sincerely, and I look forward to spring with the most delightful expectations. At present, however, we are entering into the grave part of the year. My lord leaves us two days hence, and his absence is—what you can have no notion of, that do not know what it is to be with him three quarters of the year. Not that I should dislike to have every now and then times of the greatest solitude, if I were not haunted with fears of seeing those I am with ill or low spirited. I hope you do not much know what it is to feel uneasiness of this kind, for they oppress one's heart much more than any sufferings of one's own, and give winter a terrifying appearance which hails and snows cannot add to. As for the gaieties and amusements of London, though I love them well enough when I am there, I never once trouble my head about them, but am rather glad to be out of the way of what would too much dissipate a mind naturally rather trifling. Time never hangs heavy on my hands, and with next month a hundred new employments come in season. My spinning manufacture is to be attended, and emulous of you, I believe I shall take some pains to waste some butter and brandy, to improve myself in the housewifely science of pye and pudding making. Some hours I propose spending with a good deal of pleasure in drawing in Indian ink, besides the slighter

amusement

amusement of drawing flowers, and the trifling pastime of working a bed, which I believe will prove excellent to sleep in, for already it has composed me into many a comfortable nap as I have been in the height of my diligence after supper.

I dare not ask you to write soon again, because I so little deserve it. I will only tell you, that the receiving a Letter from you will be one of the most agreeable incidents that my life is likely to be chequered with for some months. The practical inference I leave to your generosity to draw. Adieu, ma très chère, et croyez que je suis avec toute sincerité, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Oct.* 29, 1747.

What is become of you, dear Miss Talbot, I can no longer forbear enquiring; it is at least a century since I heard from you; sure it is not ill health has made you break all the promises you made in your last: send me but a line to assure me you are well, and I shall be satisfied. I take it for granted you will write and make me easy. It will find me at Mr. Hall's at Canterbury,

where I propose to be next week. To be sure I love the place and company where I am going exceedingly, and yet there is such a strange vis inertiæ in my composition, that I hate the thought of a change of situation. Indeed I have infinite reason to find a powerful attachment at home, besides the ample possession of the country all around me, where I range with the most perfect enjoyment, and envy nobody the empty title of property. 'Tis fit sometimes to change the scene, for such a state of unbounded, uncontradicted liberty as I find here, is apt to make one very untoward and fond of one's own humour; besides that such a careless rambling woodland life might bring one at last to long claws, and a look as savage and staring as Peter the Wild Boy.

I imagine you must have read the prologue at the opening of the playhouse, and that you must too be pleased with it. But have you seen a Parody on some parts of Dr. Young's Night Thoughts, and with this are you not very much displeased? You certainly are if you have as strong an abhorrence of this kind of writing as I have. Shakespear could not have a worse opinion of the man who "is not moved by concord of sweet sounds" than I have of folks who write parodies. To turn any noble and serious performance into ridicule, discovers such a perverseness of head and corruption

tion of heart, that one cannot, I think, look upon it without the utmost contempt and detestation.

I wish you joy of the glorious success of the expedition under Admiral Hawke. Are not you greatly pleased with his account of the engagement, which is wrote with a modesty not often met with in relations of this kind*.

I had wrote thus far when I had the pleasure of receiving your Letter, for which accept a thousand thanks; not but I still think you a little cruel to to have been so long silent, but the length of your Letter in some degree stops my complaints, and with great pleasure I set myself down to answer it, at a time when every body else in the family, and indeed in the town too, is gone to see a show, to which people are called by beat of drum. That you may not think higher of my fortitude than it deserves in resisting this summons, I must inform you 'tis not a raree-show, but a play. Do not you often lament, dear Miss Talbot, that this sort of entertainment, which might be rendered so useful to the interests of virtue, is so very ill regulated that it is hardly proper, I am afraid, to be per-

* This engagement was fought on the 14th of October off Belleisle. Hawke had fourteen sail of the line, and M. Letenduer nine, of which seven were taken.

mitted

mitted in a Christian country. I do not know above half a dozen comedies but what endeavour to overthrow the principles of common honesty, and take off all the horrors of vice; and the audience is by the wicked management of the writer prevailed on to wish success to the schemes of people, who in real life would deserve to be hanged. So much for my scruples concerning stage plays.

I wish you good success in the weighty and perplexed affairs of your government. I fancy there might be ways and means found to bring your rebellious subjects into a better regulation. Commit your dog, for instance, to the care of some child (I have a brother at your service), and it will soon be teized into a very lifeless orderly behaviour. Send your unruly palfrey into Kent to take morning walks with my fellow-traveller and me, and we will engage in a few months to make the creature as quiet and as moderate in his paces as the soberest ass. For though these rambles agree mighty well with us, I have heard several fine ladies positively assert, they would very soon tire a horse. As to your gardener, he being a perverse human creature, I am utterly at a loss to give you any advice how to proceed with him, and you may rest satisfied no kind of argument you can use, will ever convince him.

him that you know better how to dispose the flower-beds than he does. Good by for the present, dear Miss Talbot.

Many a hill and dale have I travelled over since I left you last night. The weather was too fine to be neglected, and I was unwilling to lose the enjoyment of the last beauties of autumn, so my peripatetic companion and I have set a compass, which, if we had gone through the air, might have measured some seven or eight miles, but it would be difficult to compute its extent upon earth. We met with some hospitable people who refreshed us with tea upon the road, which gave us an opportunity, in our way home, to enjoy the bel sereno of this charming moon, which, upon a fine green plain near the sea-side, made our walk extremely pleasant. But alas! it did not continue so all the way, for in a narrow lane we were met in very furious fashion by some wild horses, who had run away from their owners, and my companion set up such an outrageous scream for me to jump over a five-barred gate to avoid them, as quite confused and stupified me, so that I could not stir, but she had more presence of mind, and first sprung over herself, and then by mere force dragged me after her, with such violence that I was quite at a loss to know whether it was she or the horse that had got hold of me. I escaped however with whole

bones,

bones, but made a woeful figure, for this vehemence of tugging made a miserable disjointing of all my apparel, I had neither a pin nor a plait left in my gown, and after walking a few paces discovered I had lost my apron and my ruffles. Many a weary stitch must I set before I can bring the tattered state of my wardrobe into tolerable repair.

I am greatly delighted with your excellent observations upon history, though I am in no sort of danger of falling in love with heroes or conquerors, which are characters I look upon with so little reverence, that I think many an honest old woman who cries hot dumplings, a much greater ornament to human nature than a Cæsar or an Alexander; and indeed the old woman would suffer highly by a comparison with such wretches, whom one should look upon with the same horror as one does pestilences and inundations, as other severe scourges of Providence. No hero I meet with in history, who sets out on some ambitious schemes of conquest, however finely the detestable flattery of the writer may have clothed him, but goes attended with my hearty ill wishes, and I am rejoiced to see him come back as much like a fool, as he went like a madman. There is one hero, however, of whom I was inclined to have a tolerable opinion, Cyrus, but here too I begin to be shaken, for my father has almost persuaded me to believe Xenophon's history

history a mere fiction; if so, by all other accounts he is just like other conquerors, and Thomyris did mighty well, and has my free leave to cut off his head.

'Tis no wonder to a genius so extensive and so well qualified for filling up every moment as your's, the limits of time should seem a very mortifying confinement. But, alas! the want of time, is not half so bad as the want of capacity to use it, which is my sorrowful case. I am perpetually amusing myself with schemes of an hundred agreeable employments, which appear mighty practicable till I come to undertake them, and then, to my great mortification, I find it impossible to apply myself a single hour to any one thing without growing stupid, and feeling all manner of distempers.

I am obliged to be continually rambling after some new object, and never can settle long enough to gain the least effectual knowledge of any. By this means my head is a mere piece of patch-work, where no one scrap is of the least use by itself, and 'tis nothing but an awkward ill matched trumpery looking thing taken all together.

Adieu! dear Miss Talbot, I sincerely wish you every happiness a genius like your's is capable of enjoying, and that is wishing you more than will fall to the share of any body I know. May no pleasing scheme you have formed be disappointed by

by the ill health of your friends, (a kind of distress which I too perfectly comprehend), and I have the joy of meeting you in London in all the gaiety of health and good spirits; a happiness I wish for beyond what I can give you any idea of. In the mean time I hope your good-nature will indulge me, whenever you can do it with a safe conscience, with the satisfaction of hearing you are alive and well, which I shall be extremely indebted to you for, without any other addition, and I hope you may think it lawful to throw away a single minute, without the authority of an act of parliament, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Nov.* 9, 1747.

Miracolo—a second Letter already from so idle a Correspondent! always in extremes; sometimes writing once a quarter, sometimes once a week—just the way of fine ladies—Creatures that I hate as much, as writers of parodies.

Is it with such a speech as this, dear Miss Carter, that you greet this unexpected packquet? or is it after all unexpected? For was it possible I should

should receive such a mild and just reproof without being shamed into some work of supererogation? I am not however sat down to write you a long Letter, because that would be unjust to many Correspondents whom I love, and whose Letters are of a much earlier date than your's, but to enclose you a paper that was sent me some time ago, but which till very lately I had some imagination might not be genuine. As it is, I believe you will think it worth reading, and if you have a mind to take a copy of it, you may and welcome, though it would have been civiler to send you one and spare you the trouble, but when I am writing to you, I cannot find in my heart to employ a whole hour in copying. This Letter was writ by one who was 'prentice to Schemaker, the statuary, to Hoare the painter at Bath.

The prologue you mention I have not seen. The parody is to be sure of a family of poetry that I detest as you do, but not I think the most detestable of its race. Dr. Young, amid the overflowings of his excellent fancy, does lay himself open sometimes to a ridicule that hurts one, because it injures his subject and himself. If people could tell how to laugh at what is odd, without at all lessening their just admiration of what is sublime and impportant, there would methinks be no great harm in pointing out the fallible places. But

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in this age laughter is a sharp edged tool, and silly people should not be trusted with it. It is the vice of the times, and upon the whole I agree with you that parodies are wicked things. For my own part I am so apt to take things tout de bon, and consider the slightest trifles on their most serious side, that I have acquired a name among some of my merrier companions, a name out of a Fairy Tale, La Princesse Mousseline la serieuse. But for all that I can laugh sometimes, even at things that I do not altogether approve: even (which is really vexatious) at many a bad English comedy; but I lament with you that there are not more than half a-score that one would either be seen at, or seen with, nor that one cares even to indulge in the amusement of reading: for as reading what is good sense upon any subject, be it ever so foreign to one's own purposes, is always of some use, so I suppose reading what is immoral, though with ever such detestation, is always of some harm.

Adieu! If I had time, I would write in vindication of Alexander, Cæsar, Cyrus, and all my beloved heroes, whom you run down so unmercifully in the zeal of peaceableness. Did you never read Arrian? Indeed Alexander had a thousand noble qualities, the more to be abhorred are those vices (ambition the worst) that spoiled so fine a character. As for Cyrus, as he is honoured above all heathen

heathen heroes, by being expressly named in the only book that can give immortality, and as he was employed by Providence to be the happy, and the willing instrument of good to one people it then peculiarly protected, I cannot help having from this, and innumerable other circumstances, even supposing Xenophon did embellish a little, a strong partiality for him. Adieu! much happiness and pleasure attend you. Have you seen the Monody? To see it and admire it will, I imagine, be with you the same thing, if sentiment the most affectionate, images the most natural, expressions elegant and poetical, and all the soft varied harmony of numbers, have charms enough to make you overlook some inequalities; I never saw any thing that seemed to flow more from the heart—Though whether the heart would be so apt to print and publish I cannot determine; people's ways of thinking are so very different, that in those sort of things there is no judging of others by oneself. For myself wherever I feel the most, I am incapable of saying any thing. I think when I have said that, it is the civilest ending I can make to my Letter to make none at all.

P. S. Return my paper when you have done with it. Have you read Colonel Gardiner's life yet? Such a hero at least you will love. And pray

love

love the author too dearly, for all he has some awkward phrases, for I do believe his is a most amiable character. Even those things in his writings most liable to criticism, are the overflowings of an excellent heart.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Nov.* 20, 1747.

Is it not quite vexatious that till this moment I have not been able to thank you, my dear Miss Talbot, for a Letter which was most particularly obliging, as it gave me a pleasure sooner than I could reasonably have expected it? And yet it is really matter of fact, that ever since I have been in this place, I have been so hurried about that my head is like a whirlygig, and I have had time for no one earthly thing but necessary sleep, and of that less than I could have wished. If I was not a great friend to liberty, and did not think it very wrong that people should be debarred the comfortable privilege of playing the fool, I should be strongly tempted to wish the revival of a curfew, and that any assembly of folks out of their own habitations after ten o'clock at night be deemed a

riot. This would prevent many an aching head, and perhaps too an aching heart, and introduce a great deal of good order and œconomy into the world.—But instead of all these useless animadversions upon grievances I shall never live to see altered, it would be better I should thank you for giving me leave to copy the enclosed Letter, which I hope you will receive safe; that it might not come to any harm, I have resisted the temptation of shewing it till I could transcribe it. At what time, and by whom do you imagine these pictures to have been painted? The oddity of the parrot and fly, would make one suspect they were not of a very antient taste, but antient or modern, from the description the writer gives of them, I would like him trudge a good many miles on foot to see them.

I was always disposed to think well of Cyrus, and most readily come into your opinion about him, but cannot give up the point, that Alexander was a monster of wickedness and folly. One need only mention three particulars in his history to prove this, the murder of Callisthenes, his shocking treatment of Betis, a man whom if he had had one spark of virtue he must have honoured and rewarded, and his crucifying the poor physician for not being able to do a miracle to save his headstrong intemperate friend.

I have

I have not seen the Monody, but from your description, shall be very impatient till I do. You have never mentioned Amyntor and Theodora, and yet there are many things in it which I fancy must have pleased you.

" Things that love night, love not such nights as these." What are you doing, dear Miss Talbot, amidst this uproar of the elements? perhaps enjoying a perfect calm over some favourite author, while I sit listening to the howlings of a storm that echos through the ruins of the venerable* old buildings in my neighbourhood. I do not know whether you might thank me for wishing you heard it, but to me there is something pleasingly melancholy in this kind of solemn music. There is a wonderful sort of magic in it that silences all the gay sing song of folly, and lulls the mind into a very philosophical indifference of all the vanities of a trifling world, which one very quietly gives up ——till the next calm sunshine day, that restores all their fine colourings, and one listens to their siren voice with as much attention as before. There is however an advantage in being subject to these fits of wisdom, transitory and mechanical as they are, as they will sometimes recur even in our giddiest hours, and check the vehemence of our

* Canterbury Cathedral.

transports

transports about many a vain unprofitable pursuit. Did you ever read the Pleasures of Melancholy, a poem which I have heard extremely criticised and ridiculed, and yet am perverse enough to be very fond of it. 'Tis a most charming sombre piece.

Adieu! dear Miss Talbot, I hope in my next to give you a better account of my life and manners, for I propose doing many notable things next week, and getting up before day to read Xenophon. Wish me good success in this my formidable undertaking of a folio*; and believe me, &c.

P. S. I believe since the invention of postscripts none ever was wrote of more insignificancy than this, but it displeased me to see such a desart of blank paper in a Letter to you, and so I thought I would write a P. S. to tell you so, and a very unadvised thing of me it was, for what shall I say next? Oh! give you a caution concerning the Almanack for 1748, which foretells

"The ruling stars will show their force,
And throw a lady from her horse."

* Mrs. Carter was extremely short sighted, and the aversion was to the size of the volume, not the quantity of its contents. She always preferred, even to the close of her life, the very smallest editions, however bad the print.

now as I do not know any lady that the stars can more properly trouble themselves about than yourself, I hope you will take special care not to get a horse-back on your unruly animal during the month of January, for sans contredire the prediction belongs to you. And now I am talking of horses, I must tell you a story of a wonderful apparition seen last week in this place, perched upon the steeple of the cathedral like a weathercock, but in the shape of a white horse. The watchman who saw and run away from it, as any other wise watchman would have done, affirms that the wings made a noise all one comme the organ. Many are the conjectures what this astonishing horse might be, but surely 'tis strange people should puzzle themselves about such evident truths, for from the circumstance of the wings, and their musical quality, would one imagine any living wight could be so unreasonable as to doubt of its being Pegasus!

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Dec.* 28, 1747.

A MERRY Christmas to you, dear Miss Carter, and a happy new year. A Christmas spent at

at Canterbury, which I take to be one of the most agreeable, sociable places in all England, and a new year, part of it spent in London, with much pleasure to you, I hope, and (let charity end at home at least) with more to myself in seeing you. In seeing you, in spending many happy hours with you, and what doubles (ay squares and cubes) every pleasure too, in not having you to myself only, but in sharing you among four of us, our little domestic sett; for you must be vastly acquainted with us all, I can tell you. What castles am I building! I do not know so much as when either you or I set out for London, where I am already appointing our meetings. Myself, I suppose, not these two months, et ne vous deplaise, if we all keep as well as we are the whole time, so much the better, for I do love this solitude, and this leisure dearly well, though I do not make half the improvement of it that I might.

Oh, but your owl! how was I charmed, and how we were all charmed, when t'other day in reading Clarissa, out it flew most unexpectedly, and outdid the nightingale. I was going to write to you directly, and ask ten thousand questions. How came it there*? Are you so happy as to be

* Mr. Richardson's Letter, explaining this circumstance, is printed in Mrs. Carter's Memoirs, P. 69, 4to. edit.

acquainted with these Richardsons? I am sure they must be excellent people, and most delightful acquaintance. There can be no doubt, can there, that you love Clarissa? As for us, we lived quite happy the whole time we were reading it, and we made that time as long as we could too, for we only read it en famille, at set hours, and all the rest of the day we talked of it. One can scarce persuade oneself that they are not real characters, and living people. Will you give me leave to say that some things in Miss Howe's Letters put me in mind of you? Indeed I believe you would behave with more good-nature to poor Mr. Hickman, but I am sure you would describe him with the same vein of humour. Some lively sallies in her Letters, that we were highly pleased with, did certainly make us all think of you. But all this you will think far from a compliment, if you admire the book as little (pardon me) as I do the poem on Melancholy. All the images in it however that are original I was pleased with; but I could not help thinking the rest a kind of spiritless comment on Milton's Penseroso. But this was last year, when I ran it over carelessly, and perhaps a second reading would be much to its advantage.

For once you must accept a short Letter, for I have been lazy, and am so deeply in debt, that there will be no possibility of getting out, without

the utmost frugality of time, paper, and invention. Adieu; therefore, believe me most sincere in wishing you many and happy years, in whatever form or mode of happiness you like best, and in assuring you that I am, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Canterbury, *Jan.* 20, 1748.

I am afraid this is likely to prove but a stupid kind of a visit to you, dear Miss Talbot, and yet stupid as it may be, you are the only person to whom I could think of making any. A fit of the head-ache furnishes me for a plea to stay at home alone, and as talking is a mighty good remedy, I am going to chat with you the whole afternoon without interruption, a circumstance very rare in this racketing place. Not that I mention this with any kind of displeasure, for nobody can love racketing better than I do. Since I wrote to you last, I have led a life most exactly suited to my volatile humour, excepting that I had not the pleasure of Miss Hall's company. This family went for the holidays to the place of which I gave you such a lamentable description last year, and to prevent

the

the same sorrowful trial, I engaged myself during Mrs. Hall's absence at Dr. Lynch's, where I am always extremely happy. I reserved to myself however the privilege of sleeping here, by which means I had part of the morning alone, and was furnished with an excuse for slipping out of company at my own time. So I fluttered up and down the world the greater part of the day in the height of good spirits, which I never lavished away by keeping bad hours at night, for, except upon public occasions, ten o'clock was my invariable hour.

This place is at present a perfect scene of gaiety. There is a set of officers from Flanders, extremely well-bred agreeable men, who are very fond of music and dancing, and this gives great life to all our public diversions. On twelfth night we had an assembly of about ninety people, and there was fine crowding to make one's way through them, as the room is much too small for such a place as this. The first part of the evening, as it was properly a card assembly, every body played cards, but in the midst of this profundity of whist, folks who love music, were agreeably surprized by the sudden striking up of several instruments, which were introduced to entertain the company, by the officers. This was matter of great offence, and violently shocked some of the elder ladies, who thought it

was

was monstrous to be so interrupted in their game, and that such a horrid noise was a downright infringement of the rights of the assembly, so the musicians were ordered to depart in the midst of their tune. Adieu! I am going to drink a quart of milk and tea with Don Quixote, and then I shall be at your service again.

And so as I was saying, as soon as these antiharmonists would consent to part with their card tables; we had a dance. It was my sorrowful hap to meet with a most dreary man by way of partner. He was introduced to me as a person of most extraordinary sense, a character I shall always dread in future, in this capacity, for with all the art and industry I could possibly make use of, I could extort nothing from him but a monosyllable, and dancing with him was as tiresome an exercise as ringing a dumb bell. As I am always more disposed to talk at an assembly than in any other place, this was a sad cramp to my genius, and if I had not sometimes made my escape from him, I think I should have been in a fair way of falling fast asleep, and consequently growing as wise as he. To leave nothing untried, I at last delivered him over to one of the most lively entertaining people I know in the world, but even she had as little success as I had, the man stared, and seemed

astonished

astonished to hear her talk, but seemed not to have the smallest inclination to follow her example.

Bless me, I had almost forgot to let you into a most important secret, that I am grown desperately in love, more in love than any body, not with my dumb partner (poor soul) but with a most agreeable man, who talks a good deal, laughs a good deal, sings a good deal, and yet I cannot very well define why I do so greatly admire him. I believe however the strange enchantment that renders him so universally agreeable, must be the most settled look of good-nature and happiness that ever appeared in any human countenance. All the world is charmed with him as much as I, and I have only the superiority of being the first of one half of it who ventured to express my admiration, and now I have every lady in the place to keep me in countenance. And now I suppose you begin to be in great pain for my heart, as every charitable person would be, but it is really in no kind of danger, for mine is a very quiet peaceable sort of a passion, and I can safely answer for its not giving me any kind of trouble. So much for my hero, and every body's hero. There is another officer, who is greatly esteemed by many people as a prodigious scholar and a poet, and a wit who writes satires and panegyrics. There is a vast profusion of poetry flying

flying about by different authors, on different ladies, by way of songs, rebuses, and acrostics, but all these are imagined to be wrote by the chaplain, who is looked upon as a haberdasher or retailer of small wares, but who is however a comical good sort of a man.

O but concerning my poor labouring owl, which has flown post through the kingdom upon a hackney newspaper. I knew nothing of its being printed in Clarissa, till I had notice of it, to my great surprize, from a friend in London. I immediately wrote a twinkation to Mr. Richardson about it, to which I received so civil an answer that I knew not how to be angry with him, and indeed I have more reason to resent the very unfair dealing in the person, whoever it was, who gave away copies without my leave, or any restriction; it is some consolation to me it was published without my knowledge, and that it appeared in a book which I greatly esteem: but to see it fluttering in two or three journals is beyond all sufferance. 'Tis well for me that the farthing post is suppress, or to be sure it would cut a figure there too. I have met with some teizing treatment about this sort of trifles, but nothing provokes me so much as a thing I have just heard, that there are several copies in the hands of a frightful man, to whose look I have taken an utter aversion, and whose character, though

not

not publickly known, has vexed me still more; I cannot conceive what good they can do him, unless he proposes to publish them in the annals of his own infamous life. Only think of the puzzles I am in about these foolish affairs.

I most joyfully accept the honour you intend me, and thank you for your kindness; I hope in my next to let you know what day I set out for London. I will positively now in compassion to your patience and my own head conclude, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Piccadilly, *Feb.* 15, 1742.

Here I am, dear Miss Carter, when come you? Poor London, how little chance hast thou, while Canterbury and its inhabitants are so charming? But at least if this irresistible Captain Plume should come to town, we may hope to have half the belles of Kent attracted hither too. Seriously when do you intend setting out? We think ourselves not a little happy to be just got hither before the snows begin to fall; will a deep snow be any hindrance to you? You do not wish to be hindered I hope, but methinks you make it mighty late,

late, and after all could one much wonder at you? Even our solitude I leave with some regret, the change from clear air, and pleasing scenes of nature, is in itself far from agreeable. But we at least change for society, while you, poor soul, must leave the most agreeable society, and a way of life that pleases you, and me likewise in your description, much beyond any notions I can form of the giddy gaieties of fine folks here. But a little varying of the scene is good for every body, and so while the trees are preparing their fresh shoots, and the flowers imbibing their gay colours, to spread out into bloom and verdure against we return to them, let you and I, dear Miss Carter, try what improvements we can make by a spring past in London. The coming into such a new wide world, which one seems almost entirely unconnected with, and quite insignificant to, does strangely annihilate all the ideas one has collected in the country of one's own mighty importance, and mortifies one at first into a state of great meekness. I am got no further yet, so can give you no further account of the progress you are to make; if you will come up soon you will easily overtake me.

Altogether I think our first introduction into a London life has been more agreeable this year than usual. I have seen many friends, and not been much teized yet to go to public places, a thing which

which at present I look upon with some degree of horror, but that, it is to be hoped, will soon wear off. There is to tempt me out a new comedy, which I hear much commended, and which is well acted. Now I name acting, have you read that strange book Roderic Random! It is a very strange and a very low one, though not without some characters in it, and I believe some very just, though very wretched descriptions. Among others, there is the history of a poor tragedy author, ill used by actors and managers, that I think one cannot but be touched with, when one considers how many such kinds of scenes there are every day in real life. That wicked good-nature of the rich and great, that can see, and acknowledge merit in distress, speak it fair, promise high, raise expectations, and yet continue indolent, and do nothing to relieve it, is shewn in a striking manner; so is the cruelty of delaying people, and putting them off from day to day, and many other inhumanities unfelt by the doers; but not less blameable. You are in a slight degree an offender yourself, dear Miss Carter, you have raised my curiosity very much without satisfying it. Who is this wretched man you speak of with so much indignation, that has got papers of your's in his hands, and what are the vexations you have met with? All this you must tell me when we meet, that I may at least have the pleasure of pity-

ing

ing you so far as the vexations are real, and the greater one of helping you at least, not to fancy them worse than they are.

I am glad after all its fluttering up and down, your incomparable owl is fixed at last under the protection of your Hamadryad in Mr. Dodsley's laurel-grove. Well I will no longer detain you from packing up your things, but heartily wishing you a good journey, I am, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *June* 8, 1748.

I own myself to blame, dear Miss Carter, for not having writ to you sooner, your kind concern for us deserved to be earlier satisfied, and I am ashamed you should have had any occasion to enquire for us at the house.

We are all well, what we have suffered on our return hither, both in the journey down, and ever since, would give you too much pain to be told. Though I began to dread it before we left town, the reality has surpassed my apprehensions, and

I am

I am just at present pretty well convinced that the stupid insensibility I accused myself of was only a chimera. My imagination seldom lively enough in its paintings to represent at all distinctly to me even the face of persons I have conversed with the day before, is now perpetually sitting before my eyes all the much loved imagery of former happy years. I see the dear friend * I have lost in every variety of situation and employment that I was used to behold her in here. Every spot, and every object renews her idea. As this was the place she used most to enjoy herself in, and where she partook all the happiness she heightened, I cannot help foolishly, and indeed unkindly, wishing her back again, to share those paltry pleasures with me. When after a full indulgence, which is the best relief, my thoughts are naturally enough led to some other attention, they are called off by a more painful one, which I cannot help having, to my Lord and Mama. As they command themselves so well, and smooth over the outward appearance into all that calmness, and propriety of behaviour that reason and religion dictate, I am forced almost to pry into their hearts for the inward anxiety which I would so fain relieve; I watch every look,

* Mrs. Secker, the Bishop's wife, and sister to Dr. Benson, Bishop of Gloucester. She died early in this year.

and every unbidden sigh, and am in double uneasiness at every new melancholy object that I think will wound them.

This is my situation, but do not be uneasy for any of us. We shall all do well. As for myself in particular, I have, whether you will believe me or not, a natural cheerfulness of temper, as well as of principle, and an aptitude to be pleased, and to see every object in a beautiful light, that will with time give me very good spirits. I am better to day than I have been at all. We have begun our rides, and had one that was really pleasant. The Bishop of Gloucester leaving us on Friday, is no good circumstance, but we have people in the house, and never want employment.

The Pascal you shall have another time. Pray do not mention in your Letter one word of the melancholy subject that fills mine, for I must shew it, or else I shall deprive them of a great pleasure; so if you have any good advice to give, which indeed I will endavour not to need, you must give it little Mrs. Jenny, to enclose in a Letter to Jane.

So far of my Letter I writ last night just at nine o'clock by the remnant of owl light, and I find it is scarce legible. Do not imitate me for I find I am much better at giving precepts, than in setting examples. One thing however I would have you do like me: as my Letter has been all about

about myself, pray let your's be all about yourself. As indifferent as I confess I am about most things, I want much to hear all that concerns you. The health of your sister, and all your friends; the the state of your own spirits and fever; your place of abode whether Enfield or London; your employments, amusements, embarrassments, vexations; the state of your Correspondents at Canterbury, et enfin your thoughts upon all manner of subjects. Having made so reasonable a demand; I have nothing more to do, but to make you many kind compliments from the two Bishops and Mama, and to thank you, as I do most sincerely, for the many delightful hours, you was so kind as to spend with me in London, and for thinking it worth while to take so many long walks for my sake; believe me I am not ungrateful, but am ever, &c.

P. S. Pray write me a whole volume of your history, and dwell on the formidable dinner you was going to this day se'ennight.

Mrs.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Enfield, *June* 14, 1748.

I was extremely glad, dear Miss Talbot, to receive a confirmation from yourself that you were all arrived safe at Cuddesden, but I should have been excessively restless to have waited till you told me so, and if I had not been so lucky as to find Mrs. Jenny at home, I must infallibly have called at the alehouse in hopes of getting some information from your goldfinch. You were very good to make an excuse for not writing before, but as I knew you were all well, indeed, I had formed no kind of complaint against you; though your Letters always come later, much later than I could wish; I have this time the modesty to think it sooner than I deserve, and this sober reflection gives me the merit of being at least a very quiet Correspondent.

You ask me an account of my whole life and conversation ever since you left London. I leave you to guess what kind of disposition I was in after I had lost sight of the Bishop of Oxford's coach, to make the formidable visit you enquire after; such a disposition however as rendered it

no longer formidable, for I was too absent to feel any of my usual terrors on such occasions. This no doubt was a very advantageous circumstance to my appearance; I believe I made a very heroical curtsy, and pronounced the word Ladyship, a fearful word to hesitating people, without trebling the first syllable. As Miss Ward and I were just in the same humour, and talked as little as might be, except to each other, I can give you no account of the rest of the company, except that one was a physician of such a marvellous odd name, that I concluded he must be an acquaintance of Mr. Taylor's, and entitled to one of the Bishop of Gloucester's franks. In the evening my Lord W. (not Lady W.) carried us to Ranelagh, I do not know how I might have liked the place in a more giddy humour, but it did not then strike me with any agreeable impression; but indeed for the most part these tumultuous torch light entertainments are very apt to put me in mind of the revel routs of Comus. I was best pleased with walking about the gardens, it was a delightful evening, and with two or three people I should have thought them quite charming, but these scenes to me lose much of their beauty and propriety in a noisy crowd. "Soft stillness and the night, and the touches of sweet harmony" are naturally adapted to a kind of discourse, vastly different from that of beaux and fine ladies. In the

room

room we met with your friend, and my friend, the knight of the woful countenance, Sir T. R. *, who looks more wofully than ever, and is a mere ghost. Only think what kind of an appearance that must be, which is but the ghost of Sir T. R.! He entertained us with tea; and with all that dismality of aspect, there were some very comical scenes passed by way of message between him and his former dulcinea Lady *Jingle*. This is a sobriquet of Miss Ward's, and admirably proper to the person to whom it is applied, but I believe you are not acquainted with her. Miss Ward and I left Don Quixote uttering prodigious things on the subject of his passion to L. W. and Mrs. R. while we retired quietly to the further corner of the box, drank a quart of tea, and entertained ourselves with such kind of discourse as I believe is not often talked at Ranelagh. We returned to Hyde-park about eleven, and from thence I walked home. You will easily imagine at what part of Picadilly I found it convenient to cross the way. What I did with myself Friday and Saturday I have forgot, except that I wrote part of a Letter to you.

* Perhaps Sir Thomas Robinson is the gentleman alluded to. He was distinguished on account of his extreme tallness and thinness, by the name of long Sir Tho. R. The rest of the party was Lord Ward, with Mrs. Rooke and Miss Ward, his sisters, who were very intimate friends of Mrs. Carter.

I am sorry that in all my walks I can give you no account of Sancho, I looked for him very diligently all over Ranelagh, but he was not there. If you had directed me in my travels through the cities of London and Westminster to look for a stray pig, I should have expected to see the creature enter a visiting room whither my evil genius directed me the day before I left London, but I would not affront Sancho so highly as to look for him there; for as foolish an animal as Mrs. Talbot describes him, he would certainly have been ashamed to be seen in such company, as I was to my sorrow fated to support for seven or eight hours, for I most unluckily engaged myself to dinner. This affair was the more vexatious as it happened amongst people with whom I had proposed to spend a very agreeable day, and who could talk very well if they pleased; but instead of that they applied themselves with uncommon industry, for the whole time to invent the most deplorable hottentot nonsense I ever heard. It must be a very sad sort of nonsense indeed with which I ever find any inclination to quarrel, and this put me effectually out of humour, and I sat looking as miserable, and as much out of my element, as I fancy your poor goldfinch does at the alehouse. As there was an almost combination of ten people it signified nothing for me to sit making dismal wry faces, for I got

I got nothing by expressing my dislike, but to be called names of fine lady, &c. &c. &c. &c. for of the et ceteras of nonsense there is no end.

After a week of constant hurry of visiting and company, we came on Thursday to this place, where we spend our time more quietly, Mr. Wright is with us, and a clever lively woman who talks excellent French, but they depart to-day. I forgot to tell you, the Monday before we left town Mrs. Darby and I drank tea with Mr. Wright, Miss Ward was to have been of the party, but was engaged before I could let her know it, so to be sure there is a spell set against her going there as well as your's. He shewed us all manner of worlds, and I believe Mrs. Talbot and you would have been pleased with his system of the universe, which is founded upon an hypothesis amazingly grand.

I propose to myself a very great entertainment in reading Dr. Young's Night Thoughts to my aunt, for one half of them I have never read. I am not yet settled in any regular course of employment, and I do not know when I shall, for next week we return to London to meet my sister. I must beg of you, my dear Miss Talbot, to make my most grateful acknowledgements to the Bishop of Oxford and Mrs. Talbot for their great goodness to me. You cannot say more to them on this subject than I really feel, for I am indebted to

them

them and to yourself on many accounts, and particularly for some of the happiest hours I ever enjoyed in my whole life, the very remembrance of them will always give a pleasure vastly superior to most of the actual entertainments one meets with in the world. I have a vast deal of respect for you to convey to the Bishop of Gloucester, who will certainly make one of the figures in this favourite picture of my imagination. Notwithstanding your want of due respect to the science of riddles, I have taken the pains to translate you one of Mr. Wright's, and I think you will find some of the lines very pretty. Adieu! &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

London, *June* 20.

I too well foresaw what you must suffer, not to expect you would own yourself convinced of a sensibility of which you appeared so surprizingly doubtful: I was most sincerely affected, dear Miss Talbot, when I reflected on the distress I knew you would undergo, and yet it seemed so just and proper, that I could not tell how to wish

you might not in some degree feel it. But alas! you will feel it too long, and the mournful set of images in which you indulge yourself, will I am afraid fall in too naturally with the general disposition of your mind, for you to endeavour effectually to throw them off. You will be inclined to think, that reason and religion are the only proper methods of relief; but to beings such as we are, these are no more to be depended on of themselves for removing the painful sensations of the heart, than for the cure of a fever. They are, no doubt, highly and indispensably necessary, to form a decency of behaviour, to calm the extravagancies of passion, and convince one that every thing is right, but with all this conviction, and the most perfect resignation imaginable may end in nothing better than a quiet unruffled melancholy. Neither religion nor reason can alter the constitution of human nature, which however patiently it may suffer, will not be argued out of feeling while it dwells upon the object that gives it pain. To prevent this some dissipation is absolutely necessary, and an endeavour to interest oneself a little with what passes in the world. This is a remedy to which I know you will be very averse, as you have so industriously reasoned yourself into the persuasion of its being a duty to keep the mind entirely free from any real attention to any agreeable objects that surround it. I have certainly

certainly a higher opinion of your understanding, than of that of any one person upon earth, and yet I cannot help thinking you carry this virtue of indifference too far. You have a set of notions highly adapted to a more perfect state of being, but perhaps it may not be right, to endeavour to disengage yourself from a connection with that to which you at present belong, nor to resolve against every engagement with the pleasures of human creatures, because they are not the pleasures of angels. I often feel a real concern in thinking where these refinements may end; too probably I fear in depriving you of all the enjoyments of life, and leaving you sensible only of its pains; for whether you will always allow it, or no, sensibility in a high degree you most certainly have. Forgive me, dear Miss Talbot, for talking so freely on this subject, the only subject on which I ever heard you talk inconsistently. This solitary error, which appears in the judgement you sometimes pass on yourself, does certainly arise from a principle which does you the greatest honour, and commands the deepest veneration and esteem; but it may be carried too far, and that very inconsistency you sometimes discover, is a proof that it actually is so.

I believe you are as charitably disposed to draw my attention from the world, as I am to reconcile your's

your's to it. I expect the good advice you have promised me from Pascal, and will carefully read it, provided however that you send it me in a separate piece of paper, for you cannot persuade me it will make me amends for the loss of a single line in your Letter. I read this book many years ago, when I was vastly inclined to ascetic notions, (a piece of intelligence which may perhaps surprize you) and the remembrance of the disposition I was then in, has ever since given me a dislike to an author who encouraged me in it, which is all that I can recollect about him. With regard to the particular occasion when you mentioned him to me, I am at present very easy. The only trouble I now feel about it, and that is greatly lessened, is, that when I meet with any little vexations from the rest of my friends, I am apt to draw an unlucky comparison between these, and that constant cheerfulness and ease with which I used to converse with a person, who, to speak with more moderation of her character than it most truly deserves, had at least too much careless good-nature either to give, or feel, those little idle groundless disquietudes, with which people are so apt sometimes to teize those whom they most sincerely love. Our very quarrels were vastly amusing, for we sometimes used to quarrel, but with so little resentment on either side, and the debate carried on in such a

peculiar

peculiar style, that it only served us for diversion. As to my Correspondent for whom you enquire, things go on mighty quiet and well, and no new subject of complaint against me. I am a little uneasy, however, from her absolute silence about my answer to her Letter which she has never received; I should be vexed if it fell into any other persons hands, who might perhaps be witty enough to laugh at a trifling weakness without any regard to her general good sense, and her virtues, which are really a great many, and all self-acquired, which adds much to their value under all the disadvantage of a wrong education. It seems very absurd in me to entertain you with this long detail, but you desired to have a history of myself and friends, so I think I am very moderate in not writing the lives and characters of half a dozen more.

I have been in a state of absolute solitude ever since yesterday morning, when my aunt went to London to meet my mother and sister, and I am left behind to entertain Mr. Vere *, and some friends he is to bring down to-night. I should have greatly enjoyed this lonely situation for a day or two, if I

* The late James Vere, Esq. of Bishopsgate-street and Edmonton, a silk merchant, in partnership with Mrs. Carter's uncle, who had married his sister. He was author of a "Physical and moral Enquiry into the Causes of that internal Restlessness," &c. London, 1778.

was

was in a state of mind capable of enjoying any thing. I expect Mr. Vere every moment, and dread to hear the account he may bring me of my sister, and I still more dread what a longer time may produce; and yet these fears may perhaps prove groundless, and unreasonable, but in such a sad suspense it is surely impossible to be at ease.

I am much happier than I was when I was obliged to quit you at Enfield. Mr. Girle has been with my sister, and does not say any thing discouraging of her disorder, nor talk of any of those painful operations with which my thoughts have been for some time so terribly alarmed. She is at present, I thank God, very well, but she has for a long time often had intervals of ease, and I cannot help still feeling much apprehension that she may relapse, and make Mr. Girle alter his opinion of her case; but I will endeavour to get the better of them, for I believe they are wrong and ungrateful to Providence. That she is alive, and has any tolerable enjoyment of living, is a blessing much beyond what the great danger she was at first in, gave me any reason to hope. I will leave this subject, and tell you a marvellous odd story, my sister has related to me concerning Miss Ethelinda Lynch.

One evening as a Miss Gray, whom I never heard of but upon this occasion, was walking through

through the cloisters at Canterbury, she met a gentleman, who presented a pistol to her, and said, he would immediately shoot her, if she did not follow him; the poor girl was too much terrified to make any resistance, and he led her to a more retired place, and then told her he was most distractedly in love with Miss E. Lynch, and was resolved to have her dead or alive, and that if she and another person did not contrive to bring her to that very place the next Thursday night for him to run away with her, he would certainly rack her to death. Miss Gray would have excused herself, by her being utterly unknown to the lady, but her arguments were to no purpose; he told her not to flatter herself, if she did not hear from him immediately, that she should escape, for he would most infallibly destroy her. He gave her two Letters, one of which was addressed to herself, with no very civil superscription, and was to the same purpose of threatening, &c. as his discourse; the other was addressed to Miss L. He then told her she must go the next day to the choir, and make a particular signal, at which he would immediately leave the church, and by this means she might know him again. As soon as Miss Gray had got out of the clutches of this Don Furioso, she went and related the whole affair to the Dean, who desired

she

she would keep her appointment at church, which she did. The stranger appeared, she made the signal, he left the church, and has never been seen nor heard of since. A strange, foolish upshot to such an important-looking story. The Dean has sent to every public place in the town, and described his person, but no such man has ever been seen or heard of. Various are the conjectures about this very unaccountable affair, but by all the circumstances it certainly appears the man was mad. I heartily pity the people concerned. Miss Gray, it seems, is afraid to put her head out of doors for fear of the rack; and I had a Letter from poor Ethelinda to-day, who is in all manner of terrors, but tells me it would require a ream of paper to write the particulars. It is probable you may be tired with the length of my story, but it was so singular I could not resist the temptation, and if it was not past midnight it is not improbable you might have half a dozen more, but as it is, I must conclude, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *July* 4, 1748.

Here I am, dear Miss Carter, determined to answer your two delightful Letters, which I had purposed doing long ago, but always put off till to-morrow, and who knows what to-morrow is or shall produce? for since that intention and this act I have had a week's parenthesis of absolute indolence, insipidity, and uselessness; raving incessantly for victuals and drink, sleeping and frightening those I love too well ever to wish to alarm, tiring all the horses and grooms in the country with riding about how d' yeing, in this broiling sun, to the poor lady, who, forsooth, was laid up with the childish disorder of the chicken-pox. I am now, I thank God, getting pretty well again, though it is but to-day I have been allowed to dine below. I thought of you two or three times much to my mortification, for while I lay to be looked at with my most wofully spotted face, peeping out of that Gothic night-cap that you could so little tolerate, even when I put it on with my very best looks, I could not help recollecting your aversion to my dress,

dress, and almost wishing I had got on instead of it a night-cap of your invention.

But, dear Miss Carter, why do you wish me more attached than I am to the world, where the slightest disorder reduces one, in so short a time, to so low and so wretched a state of being? I feel great and lively gratitude that I have any place at all in it, and that I am continued in it among such friends, and may hope to make them some little amends for all the alarms I have given them. I am thankful for life, I love it, I enjoy it with cheerfulness, and try to improve it to the utmost. Do not, dear Miss Carter, compliment me with those sublime ideas and noble principles you so flatteringly attribute to me. I do not pretend to be above the world, but a variety of circumstances have contributed to set me at a distance from it. Directed by that guiding eye, which certainly saw that nearer I should have been too liable to be entangled, and too weak to disengage myself; convinced by blessed experience, I only wish to keep my distance. But surely there is no innocent delight or relief to human weakness that I will not most thankfully stoop from the proudest contemplation to pick up, and stick it in my bosom like any damask rose. Only trifles I would look upon as trifles, and not subject myself to be really hurt by them; nor would I ever, if I could help it, suffer my imagination to swell

swell any pleasure beyond its natural size, for fear it should also in proportion encrease the attendant pain beyond what I have the strength to bear. I cannot copy Pascal this time, but I will not forget it.

I am very much obliged to you for entering into all the particulars I desired you, both about yourself and your friends. I rejoice greatly at the good account you give me of your sister. I am much interested for Miss Ethelinda and Miss Gray, and long to know the sequel of so strange a story. I thank you for visiting Mr. Wright, and for sending me the poetical riddle upon Time. I absolve you entirely for your question, which was so far from offending against truth, that I think it was a shield very cleverly thrown before her to prevent every attack. I am persuaded, if people did but employ half the skill and genius in avoiding falsehoods, or making necessary truths appear graceful, that they employ in a very different wretched way, conversation would be quite a different thing. Adieu for the present. I have so lately got the use of my eyes again, that I must not be too free with them; but I must, before I leave off, tell you how much my mother admires your last Letter, and hopes we are both of us much the better for it. Though we have had, you know, another very considerable shock since we came here, in the heavy and sudden distress

distress of the Portland family, and though our own remembrances here are too dear and too pleasing not to attend us continually, yet are we cheerful, thankful, and really enjoy ourselves and one another, our books, our employments, our flowers, and rural scenes very well. Pray in your next, do not say any thing on the melancholy subject that would prevent my showing it to my lord; for it really went bitterly against me to secrete your last, especially as the story of poor Miss Ethelinda was too amusing not to be told him.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

London, *July* 13, 1748.

You cannot tell, dear Miss Talbot, how rejoiced I am to hear the good news of your recovery, unless you know how very sure I was you had been sick; for your long silence had made me certain of it, and I was at Enfield *, where I had no possible means of enquiring, for to be sure it is the quietest place under the cope of heaven, and

* Where her uncle's country house was situated.

as silent as the regions of sleep. I did not once hear a cock crow, a hog grunt, nor a cow low without, nor so much as a clock or a death-watch to interrupt the silence within. I had a great curiosity to ramble a little about the country, but was discouraged from this adventurous attempt by fearful accounts of straggling damsels being picked up by errant knights, and carried to enchanted castles, so that I did not venture beyond the garden, a range much too small for the extent of my genius; however, I provided myself with a hoe long enough to reach to the antipodes, and notably began clearing away the weeds. On Friday I was summoned to London, and was in hopes my sister would have staid a few days with me, but it was otherwise decreed, and they left no living wight except the cat and myself to take care of my uncle, as your friend Mr. Vere is gone to Coventry.

To be sure, of all solitudes a solitude in London is the worst, where there is not so much as a view of the sun, moon, and stars to entertain one. However, under all these disagreeable circumstances I am not much given to the vapours. I collect around me all manner of books, drawings, work-bags, and authors in all languages; of some I read the prefaces, of others the conclusions; a manner of reading which you will imagine does not tend much to my improvement; but alas!

trembling nerves and an aching head are much greater bars to knowledge than the heaviest weight of dullness (and I have enough of that too), and are not to be removed by the utmost efforts of industry. But then they are a subject for patience, and really some patience is necessary to make one support such a restless desire of improvement, with the tormenting incapacity of attaining it. Do you think such a gentle remedy as half a dozen blisters would do one any good?

Pray, dear Miss Talbot, are you all quiet in Oxfordshire? If you are, you can have no idea of the uproar occasioned here by the eclipse, and the strange frights under which people labour. One is stunned all day with the bawling of lamentable prophecies, and a form of prayer. Some run away from London, and others, deeming it the safest place, come to it, and really such as one would imagine should have more sense. The beggars in the streets actually insult folks who refuse to give them small beer, by clapping their hands, and threatening them that the day of judgment will be next Thursday. Others, as I find by a dialogue I overheard in a neighbouring court, are of opinion, that all the women in the world, only, are to die. Such are our apprehensions in the city. And I lately heard in St. James's place, that a lady, on receiving an invitation for a rout, excused herself, by

thinking it really not decent to play cards on that day; so perhaps she thinks it more decent to put it off till Sunday.

I was greatly pleased with a sermon I heard last Sunday at Spitalfields church, where there is a vast congregation of the lower sort of people. I could not help esteeming the preacher for his good-natured attempt to free poor, ignorant, harmless folks from the foolish alarms they are thrown into by those wicked, lying prognosticators, who go yelling about the streets, and endeavouring to dismay the hearts of Christians with the "signs of the heavens," those pagan terrors. Now I am talking of sermons, I must tell you how extremely I was delighted with a volume of Mr. Seed's. There is such a delicacy of sentiment, and so much elegance in the turn of expression, as is really quite enchanting. Not but there are some objections to be made, particularly the too frequent use of similes, which are often no more than pitoyable concetti, very improper for religious subjects.

Well, I have just drank my solitary tea in spite of the promise of a fine lady, who had made me hope for her company; but as she is a fine lady, 'tis no great wonder she should break her word. I believe, however, she is provided with a reasonable excuse, as it is very probable she may be engaged

in

in altering her will. You must know, this acquaintance of mine, besides the other impertinences essential to the character of a fine lady, has moreover a peculiar kind of vanity, which displays itself in a perpetual alteration of her last will and testament, for which purpose 'tis probable she contracts with a lawyer by the year. 'Tis not that the woman has any love for the people she puts in, or real resentment against those she scratches out, but she is determined upon all occasions to show the power she has to dispose of a large estate, and people who would get any thing by her must catch her at her last gasp.

I must tell you what a mortal fright I have been in about my dear fan. You must know, in the vanity of my heart, I had a great mind the fan should be seen, so I laid it upon the table, to hear what my aunt would say about it, as she has a most excellent taste in these things. She seemed quite astonished I should have such a creditable thing belonging to me, for she knows I should sooner fan myself with a cabbage-leaf than lay out any sum of money, in ornaments, that would buy a book. She admired it so very much, that I could not resist telling her you gave it me; but 'tis impossible to tell you the fright I was in, when, after saying all manner of fine things, she proceeded to give it half a dozen fashionable flirts. Had I been

given

given to squalling I should have raised the neighbourhood; as it was, I stood making the most deplorable wry faces that were ever seen, vowing in my own mind, that if it fortunately escaped unhurt this time, I would never again trust it in hands rude enough to suppose such a treasure was meant to be played with. Miss Lynch has heard nothing more of her Orlando.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *July* 26, 1748.

Are you still, dear Miss Carter, in the most forlorn and joyless of all deserts—a London solitude? or do you breathe again a freer air among the nettle groves of Enfield? Be your situation what it will, are your nerves and spirits better? When they are good, the desert smiles and blooms, and every place is happy. Indeed I most sincerely pitied you for a turn of thought, which you very strongly express, and I have often very strongly and painfully felt, a restless and insatiable desire of improvement, and such a sense of the nothingness of all one thinks, and does, and can do, as damps

damps every pursuit. But upon after consideration of this subject I have at last satisfied myself with the persuasion, that our business in this state of being is only to aim at improvement and information; and that, as the attainment of it in any satisfactory degree is reserved to a better, we ought to sit down here contented, if we find ourselves but in a teachable and diligent state of mind, and have reason to believe that we do our best, let that best be never so poor. Life would not be filled up with so many necessary trifles if employments of dignity and real worth were the things belonging to us; but as pride and vanity are perhaps our strongest and most dangerous natural bent, it was highly fit we should be perpetually reminded what poor creatures we are. A right and good disposition of mind is the highest improvement we are capable of making here, and to the attainment of this, all our infirmities, all the interruptions of our favourite studies, all that we usually reckon hindrances, distresses, or disadvantages, abundantly contribute. I hope this is not a dull, indolent scheme, for I do not in the least mean that one should lay aside the noblest pursuits of knowledge that do not lie too far out of the way, but that only, whenever we find them (by what means soever) actually out of our reach, our minds should feel no distress. 'Tis excellent for the poor illiterate animal to be comforting

you

you for the narrowness of your knowledge; but seriously, I do it upon the principle, that those who know the most are most sensible of their ignorance. Adieu! I will go take a sunshine evening walk in the long gallery, and if my thoughts should prove bad companions, a book shall amuse them into good humour.

My book has been Pascal*; and I fancy, if you had walked with me, we should have agreed very tolerably in our thoughts of him. The thing that left a disagreeable impression on your mind, must have been his life, which presents one with so gloomy a scheme of goodness, as would make any body very unhappy that should think to imitate him. But in his book itself, wherever I have dipped accidentally, it has given me the highest pleasure. What he says of the grandeur et misère of human nature, taken both together, seem to me to give the justest notions of life, nor is it at all painful to consider the dark side of this prospect, when one knows that unless things are by wilful folly put out of their due course, the sunshine is to be continually gaining ground, and the shades vanishing

* The author of the well-known and highly-celebrated "Lettres Provinciales;" but the work to which Miss Talbot seems to allude was probably a posthumous publication, under the title of "Pensées de Mons. Pascal." He died in 1662. Bayle.

before

before it, till at last the poor wretched creeping animal throws off all its imperfections, and shines out in full dignity and lustre. But even then, though every such perfected being will deserve great degrees of love and esteem, no one will surely, or can deserve such a strong and partial attachment, as is by some friendly and affectionate hearts and lively imaginations thought due to the poor insect here. Affection, tenderness, compassion, care, sympathy in joys and sorrows, every sentiment and every expression of kindness, and goodwill, are due to all our fellow-creatures; and more especially to those with whom friendship or relation has happily united us. But to center all our joys, and hopes, all our fears, and anxieties, in any human object, so as to make the happiness of our lives depend solely or chiefly upon that; to raise our affections to their utmost height, to add to them all the heightenings of imagination, and fix all this in a fairy world of our own—This is surely to put oneself in a state of mind very unsuitable to the orders of Providence, the nature of this world, and its short-lived inhabitants. This is my long comment on the passage I promised to copy out, and now here it is.

" Il est injuste qu'on s'attache, quoi qu'on le fasse avec plaisir, et volontairement: je tromperois ceux en qui je ferai naître ce desir, car je ne suis

la

la fin de personne, et n'ai de quoi le satisfaire. Ne suis je pas prête à mourir? et ainsi l'objet de leur attachemont mourra donc?"

I give you only part, the whole is good; but yet this excellent man, and most superior genius, drew very wrong consequences from these right principles, and for fear of being too much beloved, seems to me to have grown into a harshness, and austerity of behaviour to his friends, that must in a very blameable degree have given them uneasiness. Let but human creatures be beloved like human creatures, and there is no danger of going too far: and surely it is one of the highest duties for people to render themselves as amiable as they can. But as for those who make idols of their friends, I think they deserve no more toleration than you would allow to those who treat, and kiss, and talk to their dogs and cats as if they were *christians*.

I cannot have done yet with my friend Pascal, for I do highly admire him as a genius, love him as a saint, and pity him as a papist. 'Tis quite terrible and amazing to see how he renounced his understanding, his ease, and his life, from such wrong principles, as but in any thing but matter of duty, he could not but have seen the absurdity of. That ever it should come into any one's imagination, that to renounce all the comforts and accommodations

of

of life, and to shut one's eyes on all the fair beauties of this world, was the way to raise our love, and gratitude to the beneficent author! Yet this is the comfortless horrid doctrine of strict popery, and those good hearts that have been awed by it into error and wretchedness, deserve equal compassion and esteem.

You will perhaps think this a gloomy Letter, but from being low spirited lately, those ideas, which, as you justly say, one would not be without, have dwelt a good deal on my memory. But I can easily see a way when one is in tolerable health of reconciling the most tender affections, and most grateful remembrance of lost friends, with the most sprightly cheerfulness. It is but from a principle of duty to keep oneself fully and properly employed, and the mind will feel a continual satisfaction, like the vigour of youth and health, while melancholy fancy will never find a moment vacant for its soothing syren song.

I was quite delighted with your account of the eclipse. Pray have you seen l'an merveilleux, and is it worth my while to send for it? Pray what profession do you intend to take up? Some fine ladies have puzzled me, and all Oxfordshire, with a French riddle, which I send to you to find out.

ENIGME.

ENIGME.

J'ai vû, et en suis un temoin croyable,
Un jeun enfant armé d'un fer vainqueur,
Le bandeau sur les yeux, tenter l'assaut d'un cœur,
Qui paroissoit inexpugnable.
Bientôt après, le front élevé dans l'air,
D'une voix éclatante, il chantoit sa victoire,
Et pour en celebrer la gloire,
Il sembloit pour temoins vouloir tout l'univers.
Quel est donc cet Enfant, dont j'admire l'audace?
Ce n'est pas Cupidon. Cela vous embarasse.

I am quite ashamed of all the fine things you say about a fan, unworthy either of the giver or receiver. I am so far recovered as to be going to our assembly next Friday.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

London, *Aug.* 5, 1748.

As it may not be absolutely for one's credit to subscribe implicitly to the judgment of fine ladies, nor altogether prudent to declare against it, I send you l'année merveilleuse to speak for itself; if you have ever read that odd comical book

Acajou

Acajou et Zirphile, you will find some hints taken from thence.

I am much obliged to you, dear Miss Talbot, for your excellent comment on Pascal. If unfortunately for him you had not quoted his own text, from a belief that you had only honestly represented his meaning, I should have been tempted to have gone through the whole book; but there are some painters, whatever the originals, who make all their pictures angels: and you seem to make every author you quote speak good sense. I much question whether I should not write a book myself, if you would write a comment on it. En attendant, I am going in the spirit of controversy to oppose this favourite author of your's, who seems to have founded his notions of duty rather on the basis of a severe and gloomy temper, than on the cheerful, social, good-natured spirit of the Gospel. He is however most highly to be esteemed and compassionated, for having turned the edge of that severity chiefly on his own ease; and his character in many respects deserved the greatest esteem.—— Well but concerning the passage in question, which to me appears to contain a great deal of false reasoning. " On ne doit pas s'attacher, car on n'est la fin de personne—La fin de tout être, est le bonheur. Or le plaisir, l'affection qui resulte de la contemplation, et de la participation des vertus, et

des

des belles qualités d'ame de ceux avec qui nous nous sommes engagés, est un des plus nobles, et des plus raisonnables sources du bonheur humain. Ainsi il ne s'ensuit pas du raisonnement de Mons. Pascal qu'il soit injuste qu'on s'attache. Il n'est pas necessaire pour justifier cet attachement, qu'on soit la fin de ses amis. Ils suffit que l'on soit considéré comme un moien de leur bonheur, et comme tel il est injuste que l'on souhaîte de se rétirer de leur attentions, et de leur égards——La plus part des violences que l'on fait a la constitution de la nature humaine, et aux devoirs de la societé semble naître de l'idée que quelques visionaires pieux se sont formés d'un Amour *speculatif* de Dieu, qui consiste dans un mepris des vertus, et un éloignement du commerce de leur semblables, comme des êtres chétifs, et miserables. Mais ils ne content pas que c'est a cette même nature humaine tout miserable, et chétife qu'elle soit, qu'on est obligé pour toutes ces belles speculations qu'on tourne contre elle. La meilleure representation que nous pouvons nous faire des perfections morales de Dieu, se tire de leur images dans l'esprit de l'homme—— " Mais il est injuste que l'on s'attache, par ce que nous mourrons!"——cela se repond fort naturellement par—*nous revivrons*. Ne faut il pas jouir de ses amis, pendant qu'ils sont avec nous, parce qu'il peut arriver que l'on soit obligé de faire un voyage,

et se séparet pour quelque tems d'eux. Un attachement qui ne porteroit pas ses vues plus loin que le tombeau, seroit indigne d'un être immortel. Mais lorsque l'on considere la vie presente, non pas comme un état détaché, mais comme elle est effectivement, comme une partie de l'éternité, l'objection de la mort ne fait rien. On ne regarde pas ses amis comme perdus, mais seulement arrivés les premiers où nous devons bientôt les suivre; et

~~[illegible]~~ You will certainly think I am going to write a book in good earnest, 'tis time to release you from this wretched French, but I thought it but pure complaisance to quarrel with Mr. Pascal in his own language.

I am not so happy as to be running wild in the nettle groves of Enfield, but am panting for breath in the smoke of London. This is sad confinement for my active genius, however I read, write, sing, play, hop, and amuse myself as well as I can: and every afternoon walk as if I was bewitched, to keep myself in health. You would have pitied me yesterday; a friend at Deal requested me to hunt up some money. How could any mortal suppose I had a genius for getting money! However, away I posted through all manner of bye places to Lemon Street; the man received me as though I was come to cut his throat, and steal all he had. He was the very image of old Gripe in the play; he looked

looked over his books, scolded me, and at last told me I might get money where I could, for he had none for me; it was lucky for me I did not let my spirits evaporate by boxing his ears, for I needed them all to carry me to Lincoln's Inn, where my next application was to be made. Instead of the sour, contracted visage of old Gripe, here I met a smiling, round faced, fresh-coloured, cherubimical young man, who immediately gave me all I asked, upon condition of my writing such a receipt as he dictated; this I did, and hope I have not got into a *hanging* scrape, for he threatened an arrest if the money was not paid, so who knows but you may hear of me peeping through a grate.

Your riddle has extremely puzzled me, and I am utterly unable to find it out, which to me, who love a riddle to my heart, is a very mortifying thing. You enquire what profession I mean to take up in this Année Merveilleuse; I have duly considered the point, and can find but one I am fit for, which is, trudging over hill and dale, from county to county, in quality of a raree-show man.

My solitude is next week to be turned into hurry and company; after having had the house to myself so long, I doubt I shall feel frightened, and run into holes and corners like a wild kitten. Adieu! &c.

Miss

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Aug.* 2, 1748.

Many thanks to you, dear Miss Carter, for your pacquet with l'an merveilleux, it has mortified my English vanity a good deal. It is a whimsical thing enough, and makes one smile. But, thought I, to be sure our choice English geniuses, who were beforehand in this subject, must needs outdo this French bagatelle in sterling wit. So pray, sir, be so good (to a gentleman who was with us) to look it out for me. If ever you read it you may easily guess that a very few pages sufficed me of such water-wit, and indeed the French delicacy appeared to great advantage, compared with the English coarseness. The only French books I can absolutely not read are French tragedies, properly so called, at least Crébillon's, which I have heard commended, and have been looking over this summer. Things so overcharged with plot, so stiffened with rhyme, so larded with gallantry—You can have no idea what an intricate thing he has made of Zenobia, so nobly elegant in Metastasio's simplicity. The French paragraph in your last gave me great pleasure. We are too near agreed, I fancy, to carry on a controversial Cor-

respondence. Let the attachment but be moderated by a sense of superior duty, and kept calm by reason, and an ease of temper, and I will delight myself as much as you please with those dawnings of excellence, which appear among us, poor creatures, even in this our infant state of being; and will own with joyful gratitude, that friendship and just affection give the happiness and dignity to human life, and lay the first foundation for joys that shall survive it. But surely there is more need of moderating, and regulating, than heightening these dispositions which are so liable to run wild. Partial fondness, misplaced trust, vain hopes, bitter disappointments, endless anxieties, comfortless sorrows, and sometimes resentment towards others, sometimes utter despondency in ourselves, pretty surely follow these unhappy errors. Let the highest affection be fixed above this world, and every other will rise in just proportion, and the harmony of life be complete.

All that in Pascal is unsociable, harsh, and gloomy, I utterly disclaim, and I have even sometimes thought our favourite Mrs. Rowe* went a good

* This censure seems rather too strong. Mrs. Rowe appears to have been naturally of a very affectionate, and rather a cheerful temper. Her attachments were very warm, and while her husband lived, at least, she enjoyed this life, though she always looked forward with joy and hope to a better.

deal too far in shunning the cheerful engagements of life, and nourishing a disgust and hatred of it. These things are done with a very good meaning, but surely a mistaken one; and while we are continued in this world, we ought thankfully to make, and think, and speak the best of every thing in it, that is innocent; common good breeding and good-nature teach us this kind of behaviour at the most ordinary entertainment that is made for us. And shall this fair world have been formed with such exquisite art, and inexhaustible bounty purely for us, and this life so carefully preserved by an ever-watchful Providence, only to be disliked and railed at, and so far as we can and dare, scorned, and refused? Well, are we agreed now? Or will you take the other side of the question? Poor wretched creatures that we are, the best of us are forced to run a little wrong on the right side, lest we should err too far on the other, and more dangerous. Yet indeed we have much in us too that is noble and amiable, and the thought that these excellencies shall in due time be perfected by the Giver of them, and made for ever to approach nearer their divine original, may make us amidst all our infirmities look round upon one another with joy, fondness, and admiration. I am therefore, aimable être humaine yclepéd Miss Carter, &c.

P. S. Next week are Oxford races, which whether I shall go to or not, I know no more, than whether I have a mind to go to them; I am sadly afraid I have, for I do not think it a right taste, or a rational idea. Regard for human excellence, if I had it not in the tenderest degree, I should be inexcusable, who have had, and I thank God still have, the unequalled happiness of such friends. *Qui l'a conduit; nous conduira.* Perhaps of all the notions of future happiness none is so intelligible to the human mind, and heart, as that of meeting again in joy those dear friends, we either have lost, or may lose, never to part again, and yet undoubtedly even this is low, to what our improved natures will be capable of. I must leave off, or my P. S. will be as long as my Letter.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Oct.* 10, 1748.

It is an age, dear Miss Carter, since I have written to you, but this fine weather tempts us to take so much exercise we have no time for any thing else; I say us, for my Lord rides with me every day, and we think it has done him a great deal

deal of good. Not a day passes over my head without some of those saddening reflections my last was full of, but those remembrances that go nearest the heart do not really hurt the mind that has learnt to look beyond them, and every event of this life; nor do they hinder its very cheerful enjoyment of those things which it knows it is its duty to rejoice in. As for me, I am grown a very tolerable horse-woman, and make no more noise of riding sixteen miles of a morning, than you do of walking ten. Besides our daily rides, we have been to see several fine places; Stowe for one, which is to be sure worth seeing, when one lives within twenty miles of it, but there are many in Oxfordshire I think more beautiful. It is however very magnificent, and is both decaying and improving every day. One of my late exploits has been venturing myself a whole night in a moated castle *, that does really look as if a giant, or at least a score of knights armed cap-a-pié were to sally out over the draw-bridge. My errand there was to look at Jupiter

* Sherborn Castle, the seat of the Earl of Macclesfield, one of the finest specimens of the old baronial castle that is yet remaining. The word *chateau* is improperly applied to it by Miss Talbot, as its present meaning is only a country seat.

through

through one of Mr. Huygens's* long telescopes, which is this summer in possession of Lord Macclesfield, the hospitable and learned owner of this romantic chateau. I saw that bright planet in perfection; but what are all these sights?—Mere walking on a terrace that seems boundlessly long, and gives one the greatest desire to go a great way on it, and into the beautiful country that seems to open beyond it, and before one has gone ten yards, finding oneself on the brink of an impassable ha-ha. But what matters it, if there is among those things that properly belong to us, more than enough to employ to the utmost every faculty we possess, in their present unimproved state. Hereafter perhaps we may freely expatiate among all these planetary worlds. I was looking this morning on the last chapter in the book lately published of Mr. Mac-Laurins†, and was delighted and struck with it most peculiarly. The subject of it is the highest

* A celebrated mathematician and astronomer, who made great improvements in the art of polishing glasses for telescopes, and may be called the Herschell of the seventeenth century.

† Perhaps the work alluded to may be Maclaurin's Answer to Bishop Berkeley's "Analyst," which was published in 1742; but the editor has not an opportunity of consulting the work itself.

and

and noblest that can be chosen, and in one part of it, he is mentioning the reasons that may be drawn from the superiority of our capacities, and desires, to any of their present objects, to convince us, that this state is but the infancy of our being. His heart seems to glow with the thought of what glorious and delightful scenes may be for ever opening upon us, in an unknown eternity—When abruptly the chapter breaks off, and from a circumstance mentioned in his life, one finds that this break was his last farewell to mortal things, and within a few hours of his entering on the reality, of what is in his book, a most sublime and pleasing speculation. Have you read the Lives of the Popes*? What a shocking story is that of Hypatia! We have upon the whole read very little this year; the studious, the leisure season is now coming, and instead of enjoying it here, we shall be in detestable London. How very different a situation of mind did I use to be in at this time of the year! more, much more of anxiety in it I confess—but the remembrance of that anxiety is dear and pleasing to me. With what different sentiments did I then see the trees grow bare, and the leaves scattered by the wind.

* Probably Bower's. The story of Hypatia, and its miserable catastrophe, may be found in the Biographical Dictionary.

How

How did I use to welcome the sweet hours of peace, retirement, and domestic quiet—To look forward through three or four months, and joyfully determine to make the best of them; enlivening the still scene with every pleasing thought, and every cheerful employment. As I much feared for the sufferings that January brought with it, to her who now shall never suffer more, so I doubly pleased myself with looking on to all the days that would give her pleasure, and many, I thank God, were these happy days. Now when I walk by the roots of those early spring flowers, which used generally in some sunshine day before we went, to put out their silken heads, and be gathered for her, who had a taste for every elegance; I look upon them ——very foolishly perhaps, but every little circumstance that we used to hoard up as it were, for the delight of those months, that must now be spent so differently, is part of a treasure become useless, and will sometimes force a sigh, though reason and duty check it immediately. Remember, dear Miss Carter, in your answer not to notice this latter part of mine, and do not blame me for an indulgence which affords me great delight, and which I can but very seldom give myself.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

London, *Oct.* 22, 1748.

As I am immoderately fatigued with writing twelve Letters, 'tis surely very reasonable to refresh myself with writing the thirteenth to dear Miss Talbot, to tell her how much I rejoice that both my Lord and her have been so well employed, and hope your healths will benefit greatly by it. I greatly admire your courageous spirit which in defiance of *Grim Slay-good*, *Giant Despair*, and *Miss Much afraid* his daughter, and all the giants and giantesses one reads of in books, would enable you to venture yourself a night in that same formidable enchanted castle. I envy your situation there, rather more than in the gardens of Stowe. I find some small degree of impatience for your coming to town, which perfectly reconciles me to the loss of the country, and few things besides your conversation could console, or make me amends for not seeing the last falling leaf, and enjoying every ray of autumnal sunshine. I was delighted yesterday in walking through the park, to see something that looked like trees, though they are by no means such tree as flourish in our Kentish fields, which still look gay, in all the verdure of spring, and do not appear

appear as if they dreaded any December. In my walk homewards, I called on an acquaintance, who has hurt me whenever I have thought of her since; she appeared to me in a dying way. It is a person to whom I have no particular attachment, but it makes me quite melancholy to think, she has in all probability thrown away her life, from a deplorable slavery to the world. On this principle she has harassed out a constitution, which a prudent management might have rendered tolerable, by the fashionable extravagance of late hours, and racketing parties, of what is called pleasure, and to which she had no temptation but custom, nor any enjoyment, but in the satisfaction of her conscience, that she has performed the *indispensable* duties of a fine lady; and yet she seems entirely ignorant how such a task as this should render her weak, and languid. It seems a great defect in most treatises of morality and rules of action, that one meets with no arguments drawn from the mechanical part of the human constitution. It would surely be an useful endeavour to convince people, that there is but a determinate quantity of spirits assigned to their share, and if they will lavish these away in an undue manner, and to unprofitable purposes, it is not to be wondered their assistance should fail in carrying on the necessary functions of life. This is a point of instruction as needful

needful to those who pursue the most laudable, as those who weary themselves in the most worthless schemes; and it is for want of a due attention to the limited powers of action that one often finds good people exclaiming against the wretchedness and imperfection of life, merely because they find themselves disappointed in their endeavours to run greater lengths than the nature of their constitution and the order of Providence ever designed them. And thus the philosopher as effectually arraigns the will of Heaven for not indulging him in an outrage of wisdom, as the libertine does when he finds himself checked in a career of folly. I have almost wrote myself blind, and in order not to contradict my own sage maxims, must leave you. We are all going to be turned upside down. My uncle and Mr. Vere are going to part. I wish the hurry was over, though I am to be mightily pleased with our new house, as Mr. Vere says it is *a very magnanimous house;* 'tis but a little way from here.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Piccadilly, *Nov.* 4, 1745.

Here I am, dear Miss Carter, and here you may find me to-morrow or Sunday, or whenever you will be so good as to call. We breakfast and sup at nine, and dine at three, except Sundays, when we generally dine at one. Now I have told you our hours once for all, pray make practical inferences accordingly. We came to town last Saturday, but I would not send for you till we were out of the embarras of trunks and boxes, and at leisure to receive you a little civilly, which with some grief of mind I think we never have done yet. Adieu! Whenever you are so good as to come, be assured we shall all be heartily glad to see you.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

MY DEAR MISS TALBOT,

Canterbury, *April* 15, 1749.

I got safe to this place on Thursday night, after as pleasant a journey as could happen to any body who hates every coach in the world but one. As the common stage was full, we set out in a creditable-looking landau, and only four passengers, consisting of two of the quietest, gentlest Frenchwomen I ever met with, and one who seemed to be a good kind of an English body, but somewhat apprehensive of *accidences;* and a very untoward accidence was certainly our fate, for while we were rejoicing at the easiness of our conveyance, and greatly disposed to be pleased with each other, 'tis not to be imagined the supreme consternation that appeared in all our faces, when at the end of two miles we beheld the fattest and most magnificent of all gentlewomen, who with a most boisterous air demanded admittance, which nobody seemed willing to grant her; but however, in a most violent passion she forced her way, and in an instant occupied three quarters of the coach. The poor Françoises appeared absolutely overcome, and

and without resistance were drove into the smallest of all corners, with great meekness observing, Assurément cette femme agit très cavalièrement. For my own part, I could not help wishing for Lucian's Menippus *, to divest the good woman of her superfluities; for if he had stripped her of the pompous gold brocade, and the bed-gown over that, and the velvet cloak that covered the bed-gown, she might have been reduced to the moderate size of any two or three gentlewomen of these degenerate days, and her fellow-travellers been greatly relieved. However, I was obliged to her for more diversion than I expected, and laughed very heartily all the way, which to be sure was very rude; but there was no fear of abashing her, for on observing the miserable wry faces of most of the company, she declared that let folks look, or say what they would, it was always her rule to be at her ease, which accordingly she most strictly observed, and for about thirty miles squeezed poor suffering people to death with the most perfect composure to herself. At Rochester our company was changed, and I met with some of my own

* A Cynic philosopher, whom Lucian frequently introduces, in order to show the folly of external advantages, and of all such acquirements as will be of no use after death. And to prove this, the characters with whom he converses are deprived of all their superfluities both of art and nature.

friends,

friends, and from thence to Canterbury was laudably employed in defending the cambric act, and declaiming against smuggling, without, I believe, making one convert. Ever since I came here I have been wandering about, and making a thousand unnecessary engagements. I am so glad to see people, that in the blundering joy of my heart, when they are so civil to desire to see me again, I never fail to promise them, notwithstanding the speech Miss Hall takes such infinite pains to make me get by heart, by way of signification that 'tis impossible for me to pay so many dozen visits, to so many dozen friends, in so short a time, especially if I will spend whole hours in exhorting folks to rise early in the morning and take care of their health. I go to Deal on Wednesday, and shall hope to have an account of the masquerade (if you do go to it) and of your dress.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *April* 25, 1749.

Gone, dear Miss Carter! and how, and why! What a change of scheme! How came it about? had you a good journey? how do you do? are

are you in good spirits? does Deal and spring look in high beauty? do you a little, yet not too much, regret London and all its gaieties? Why would you not come in that last evening, since you would not let me thank you in all our names for the many, many delightful hours you gave us in the midst of our London hurries and perplexities; they will, I hope, be over this week; a most tiresome week it is likely to be. How weary I am of this tumultuous life! yet somewhat amused with it too, and should be extremely so if I had leisure to sit down one day out of four, or one hour out of six, to reflect and speculate upon it as I could wish.

My mother is, thank God, so much better that I went last night with a safe conscience to see Merope. 'Tis a bad play, but a most admirable and interesting story, and incomparably well acted. I went one morning of last week, quite chid there by my lord and my mother, to the Vauxhall music. We went by water, and returned in a coach through Fulham by a beautiful country, sweet as spring could make it. The crowd was astonishing, but not terrible. I took it for granted you was there, though among 8000 people we did not happen to meet one another. Dr. Potter was there, looking and enquiring for you. So much (and indeed too much) for the history of this idle me.

April

April 29.

It may seem strange, but my having received from you a Letter, for which I am much obliged, is the reason I have not sent this, as you wish for some account of the fireworks *, which I most sincerely regret you did not stay to see. God be thanked, we all came safe back from the perils of Thursday night, and I hear but of two or three accidents among the whole multitude of people. I never saw a more perfect orderliness; we had no crowd going or coming, and our places were excellent. My poor mother suffered much from her terror when the pavillion took fire in too good earnest, which took off all her ideas of pleasure, and mine were much lessoned of course. We were at home by twelve. My lord was so good as to go with us, and was a great comfort among all our fears. The sight was really magnificent and fine so far as it went, and I wished we could have had the whole, as indeed we had not half. Alas! even for that half two lives were lost; and I cannot help pitying Mr. Frederick and the Italians, who must have had their whole hearts in this thing they had been so long preparing. Adieu! I am so busy

* On account of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. They were exhibited in the Green Park, and supposed to be the finest ever seen in this country.

preparing for Monday, I can add no more but, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *May* 5, 1749.

You were extremely good, dear Miss Talbot, in giving me an account of the perils you went through last week, and I hope to hear you have with equal safety got through the formidable difficulties attending the important affair of the masquerade, which must certainly have been a grievous task to such odd, out-of-the-way people as you, to whom nothing but good sense and the true purposes of living are an amusement, and all the gay bagatelles of folly immense labour and vexation of spirit.

I spent a most agreeable week at Canterbury, and the very affecting pleasure after a long absence, of seeing and conversing with people whom I have the utmost reason to love and esteem, carried me through a constant hurry with great spirit; and a spinnet at almost every house I went to kept me from talking myself to death. On Wednesday I took

took my place in the Deal coach, but on finding it stuffed with six queer-looking people, in a hot dusty day, it was agreed that the man should take me up at the end of some miles, where he was to discharge one of his passengers; but it seems he took it so much in dudgeon that I should resist his persuasions of making the seventh, that he drove quite away, and left me to trudge on; so I procured an honest country lad to accompany me, and performed the sixteen miles with great alacrity, only now and then reposing on a green bank, and under a shady tree, where I treated myself and my swain with plumb cake. This strange expedition, which certainly did me more good than harm, would have been much more agreeable to me than that wretched coach, if it had not been for the lamentable fright the knowledge of it has thrown Miss Hall into. I have been obliged to send her reiterated accounts that I am not dead, but she does not yet seem to be perfectly convinced; I fancy, therefore, it will be necessary to send her a certificate, signed by the minister and churchwardens, to prove that dead people do not write Letters, and that I am alive and looking.

There is a great charm in ease after so much hurry. My little quiet room is set to rights, all my affairs are arranged in their proper classes, I sit down and enjoy all my playthings with much

tranquillity, and look upon myself as much settled in the world as the varying nature of that world will admit; for as to the being regularly settled any where but in the grave, it is a circumstance, whatever the notable folks may say about it, of which I have very little notion.

My little brother and sister do not suffer me to want employment; they are just now under my care, but it is not a fatiguing charge, as neither of them are *very* dull, but one is inexpressibly volatile. He skips and dances, and plays all manner of monkey tricks, while he is saying his lesson; but as this activity is no impediment to his learning, I never interrupt him. He exercises my whole contrivance to prevent his running in the streets, and sure much contrivance is necessary to find employment for a lively boy. I have racked my invention all manner of ways to divert him. He is allowed the full use of looking over every picture-book in my closet, and to stun my head by playing over all his tops and whips, &c. in my chamber; but of all this he is soon tired. At length I have hit upon a lucky expedient, by setting him to draw perpendiculars and triangles. A scale and compasses are playthings that entertain him with sufficient variety, and keep him as quiet and as well-pleased as heart could wish.

You

You would have been diverted in seeing how I was tormented this afternoon by insinuations of designs from a man who certainly has none, and it was mere malice, for he is the quietest and most peaceable creature that walks on the face of the earth, and has absolutely no meaning about me or anybody else; however, as I have been convinced that one is not perfectly secure on this side an hundred, it will be quite prudent in me, by way of precaution, to learn to swim; having run away from matrimonial schemes as far as dry land goes, my next step must be into the sea. If by the gaieties of London you would have me regret, you are just enough to mean those dear, delightful hours I spent in conversations the most congenial to my ideas of perfection, I do indeed regret them; but as to any others, they were dashed with too strong a tincture of bitters to leave any very agreeable impression behind; I regret them not.

Pray let me hear from you soon. You cannot think how I quarrel with the lilies of the valley, because I cannot by a wish place them in Mrs. Talbot's window. This Letter is so long, that I think you must send it with Tom Jones to be read in the country.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *May* 22, 1749.

Had my journey into Oxfordshire, my dear Miss Carter, been half as worth telling as your's into Kent, you would have had my thanks long ago; but as the terrors of the first fire-works were over, and you did not know I went to the second, and as I had found out that masquerades were very safe harmless things, I thought you would be in no manner of pain about me. After all the fine compliments you have made me on the unsuitableness of trifling amusements to my better taste—alas for me! how shall I bring my pride down to own, that the masquerade really amused me? I will not tell you at least, that the preparations for this grand affair were not very vexatious to me; to have such a set of nonsensical ideas running in one's head for a fortnight before May-day, and I am afraid a full week after, was really provoking. Is it not more so that I should be so vain of my dress as to have a kind of second-hand amusement in describing it to you? But you know dress is the thing of all others for which I have the least genius; I therefore depended on my friends and the people of the warehouse, but they were all masque-

masquerade mad, and had no time to think of me. On Monday morning I had no one thing provided but an old fan and two pair of new shoes, a hopeful beginning; but I kept myself quiet, and by nine at night my dress was compleated. I know no other name to give it than a paysanne de la Romancie. The waistcoat was white, slightly trimmed with gold, and such sleeves, so scalloped, so laced, that nothing but Lady Betty Modish's scarf ever equalled them; the under sleeve was close to the wrist, with little Bruxelles ruffles tied with red ribband; the petticoat was white, with a rich brocade border, gold and colours; a white and gold muslin apron, tied up on one side with red ribband (these were lent me by Lady Anson); the same coloured ribbands tied my waistcoat; and a bouquet of myrtle on one side was all the ornament of my dress. A Vandyke handkerchief, most indescribably pretty, of white cyprus, with a narrow gold fringe, and a pearl necklace. A hat of the same, with a hatband of flowers, and the cyprus glittering with gold and spangles; the hat turned up on one side, and fastened with a red knot, and my diamond solitaire. These are still to be seen for a penny apiece, the rest of my borrowed plumes being returned to the right owners. I should have mentioned a hoop rationally small, and a black mask. But the chain of my thoughts has been grievously interrupted by various

various country employments that have called me away in the midst of these important descriptions.

My mother thanks you for your kind thoughts about the lilies; and indeed, to say truth, her window was much neglected after you went, and had fewer supplies of flowers than any unmasqueraded daughter would have provided for her. I am glad to find the town has not quite spoiled me, but that I settle again to my country employments with as high a taste as ever; yet but two nights before I left town I thought it impossible to sup before eleven. The Bishop of Gloucester comes to us to-morrow for a week. You may imagine us all as happy as you please, enjoying his company in this charming place, with all the leisure and quiet I have been sighing for all the winter. I have just been reading some curious discourses by a famous Abbate Salvini, in which a doubt is moved, if Pallas were to marry, who she should chuse?—and this man (to be sure you corresponded with him as well as poor Mons. Barretier) has married her to—who do you think? even to Captain Mars. Alas, for poor Apollo and all his humble votaries! The more I read Tom Jones, the more I detest him, and admire Clarissa Harlowe—yet there are in it things that must touch and please every good heart, and probe to the quick many a bad one,

and humour that it is impossible not to laugh at. Adieu!

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *June* 20, 1749.

Have you concluded, dear Miss Talbot, that I was run away, or that I had determined to translate all Epictetus before I sent you any. Alas! the scraps enclosed will prove how idle I have been; but I have been ill, and this is about the time of year my mother makes her round of visits, which serve for the rest of the year. She sets out about three, and remains fixt to one chair till sunset. It is not, however, expected for me to hold out the whole time. I should certainly conclude I had lost the power of motion, and fancy myself bedridden. Are you blest in Oxfordshire with a warmer climate than we are? At Deal we absolutely freeze, and sunshine skies and green trees affect one no more than they would by seeing them at Christmas in a picture. I was delighted with the description of your dress, and heartily wish I had seen you in it; but mistake me not, 'tis you and not the dress I would have seen.

I am

I am at present so extremely indolent (an evil that will encrease and not diminish) that if my very *fantome* could be brought by much wishing, 'tis ten to one whether I might have the heart to bestow it, which is saying a great deal, if you had an idea what sort of an object this same fantome is, which you certainly have not, by your rallying me so about a Captain. A plume and a cockade never once entered into his composition, and to any of the Captains of this world, who have fallen in my way, he bears not the least resemblance. You would certainly have been much nearer the figure of my fancy, if, instead of a blustering hero, you had represented him as gentle and elegant as Mrs. Rowe's Philocles *, and, whatever you may think of it, almost as serious too. But now I have mentioned heroes, and in no very civil fashion, 'tis but just I should retract my epithet in favour of one with whom I am greatly delighted, who is no other than Eumenes. There is something so amiably modest and quiet in his character, so very unlike the character of tragedy heroes, that if it were only on his account I should be a little disposed to quarrel with you for calling Merope a bad play. The author, to be sure, has been guilty of one essential fault in not assigning this gentle youth to

* See her "Six Letters from Laura to Aurelia."

some

some such quiet, peaceable person as you or me, instead of delivering him up to the violent gentlewoman, who was for "storming attention's ear." My vanity is really not equal to the insolent comparison I have made, so I take shame to myself, and ask your pardon.

I am sorry to find you so outrageous about poor Tom Jones; he is no doubt an imperfect, but not a detestable character, with all that honesty, goodnature, and generosity of temper. Though nobody can admire Clarissa more than I do; yet with all our partiality, I am afraid, it must be confessed, that Fielding's book is the most natural representation of what passes in the world, and of the bizarreries which arise from the mixture of good and bad, which makes up the composition of most folks. Richardson has no doubt a very good hand at painting excellence, but there is a strange awkwardness and extravagance in his vicious characters. To be sure, poor man, he had read in a book, or heard some one say, there was such a thing in the world as wickedness, but being totally ignorant in what manner the said wickedness operates upon the human heart, and what checks and restraints it meets with to prevent its ever being perfectly uniform and consistent in any one character, he has drawn such a monster, as I hope never existed in mortal shape, for to the honour of human nature,

and

and the gracious Author of it, be it spoken, Clarissa is an infinitely more imitable character, than Lovelace, or the Harlowes.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Piccadilly, *Nov.* 4, 1749.

I am ashamed, dear Miss Carter, to think how long ago your Letter is dated, but various causes must plead my excuse. We have been a fortnight in this noisy town, oh, how I wish for you; but possibly you are happier where you are, for wherever you are, you must be surrounded with friends, it is impossible to know and not to love and esteem you more and more. Happy you doubtless are at home, but happier would you be were you to change it for a home, more properly your own, with one well chosen friend for life; for though one is apt to attach oneself fondly to scenes one has been any time fixed in, yet certainly that is not the kind of happiness intended for us, in this changeable state, where action, improvement, and a continual progress is our allotted part. In this our short travelling day we should go as far, and take in as great a variety of prospects, and diffuse any good

good influence we may have as wide as we can. The more connections we make here, the more friends we shall have to rejoice with hereafter in a permanent state of felicity, looking back with them to those perplexed scenes of human life, in which we have assisted and comforted each other. Human creatures are not like plants to grow only in one spot, but flourish the better for every proper change of place.

'Tis time I should talk to you about the kind and obliging perseverance you exert for my sake. I admire Epictetus more and more every day, and this last chapter about storks* nests especially. There is a nobleness in its simplicity very striking. A superiority of thought, and shortness of expression, that makes both my mother and me wish for more. It is but fair to tell you we copy your papers into a little book, so you need not return them. I wish I could deserve half your goodness— But the fig-tree must have time to grow good for any thing. All I entreat is that you will not write and make your head ach for our sakes.

Poor Lady Carpenter, at whose house I had the satisfaction of meeting you, is in the deepest distress and affliction, for the loss of a very good husband, whom she tenderly loved. In that very room where

* See Book I. Ch. 28. Sect. 3.

we have seen her so happy, she now entirely lives, and passes many bitter days and nights. Her daughter never leaves her, and keeps up a frame of mind that is truly admirable, the justest mixture of tender affection, and that cheerful spirit, that is so important a part of duty, and is necessary to the very going on of life. What a stock of christian fortitude ought persons to lay in early in life, that they may not sink under its unavoidable evils, but go on conquering, and rejoicing to the very end. A very different temper this from stoical insensibility, but possessing all the advantages of which that vainly boasts. I imagine before you receive this, you will have received Mr. Upton's Arrian from my Lord.

I must tell you why the Princess's birth-day is not kept on Monday, because it will give you a new degree of respect, and affection for the King. The 20th, it seems, was the day of the Queen's death, and he always consecrates it to her remembrance in the most serious, and affectionate manner.

Dec. 5, 1749.

The French actors I believe are decamping. Begging pardon of my dear countrymen, whom even as a mob I love, and honour, I do not like this savage selfish kind of inhospitable spirit among our common people, any more than I do the foreign fopperies

fopperies of our fine Paris haunters. But one is a good corrective for the other.

Lord Trentham is 134 a head to-day, and will probably carry it. As this has been made such a violent party affair I am glad it goes thus. Mr. Justice Fielding has published a most excellent charge, with which I am much pleased.

Voltaire has just published (at least it is just come over) with his Semiramis, the foolishest, idlest, coarsest critique upon Hamlet that ever was*. He seems not to have entered into the meaning of any one scene. The only French book I have of late been charmed with, is the Memoirs of Racine, and his Letters published by his son; in which he appears to have been a character superior to all learning and poetry, one of the most amiable good men, religious, friendly, domestic, public spirited; and his very weaknesses are to be revered, though an over scrupulousness cramped his genius; and tied him down too closely for some years to mere domestic life. Have you seen this pretty book?

* Voltaire received afterwards a sufficient correction for his vanity from the elegant pen of Mrs. Montague, in her well known Essay.

MRS. CARTER TO MISS TALBOT.

Deal, *Dec.* 16, 1749.

I DO not wonder at any impertinence Voltaire can utter, after having affirmed that the English have no genius for poetry. I have not seen Racine's Memoirs nor any other French book for an age, except Telliamed, which seemed to me so heavy, and obscure, that I could not read it. What sort of a performance is the second history of Tom Jones? I do not know whether you may think I am likely to profit much by Mrs. Phillips's *, but my evenings next week are to be employed in hearing it read. Most people here give it a high character.

Though I am generally on the side of our governors, I at present heartily join with that venerable public spirited body of people, the British mob; and you must say a great many very handsome things of Lord Trentham †, before I can agree with you

* Probably the Memoirs of Con. Phillips; a book which at that time made some noise, but which has long since sunk into merited contempt.

† Afterward Marquis of Stafford; the famous contest here alluded to between him and Sir George Vandeput is well known.

you in being *very glad* of his election. We have vices, and follies enough of our own, and there is no manner of need for this zealous encouragement of their importation from foreign parts. The French hurt us less by their arms, than by their fashions, which serve only to fill the heads of our countrymen, and countrywomen, with idle expensive trifling, and lay their hearts open to corruption, in order to support it.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *Dec.* 25, 1749.

I think in your English zeal, you are, my good Miss Carter, a little of the ancient savage Briton, and rather inhospitable in your notions. I am far from honouring Lord T. but as for French plays, I confess could I have got over half a dozen fears, I should have liked to have gone to them. Why should every thing French go in the general class of vices, and follies? Moliere, I fear, was a much more decent, moral writer, than any comic

known. The popular cry against Lord Trentham principally arose from the part which he had taken in supporting the French players.

author we proud English can boast; and their present run of comedies are of a kind as instructive, and engaging as the *Conscious Lovers*, without the mixture which disgraces even that.

I know nothing of the diversions of this great town, save that I have been told, the first Thursday night after the election, his Grace the Duke of Bedford; or at least her Grace at her assembly, had a faro table, kept by a Frenchman. Now be as angry at this, as ever you will, Belle Sauvage. But you English woman, how do you come to talk such excellent Italian? the most pure, the most classical, the most elegant, the most faultless—I wish you would come and teach me, for I hear great fame of you.

The new Milton * is a pompous thing, without being I think a very fine one. Prints to such a poem seldom answer one's ideas, though one or two of these are very well. As for his life it provokes one. I would have all fine books drop down, like the image of Diana from the Moon, without having the mortification of knowing the infirmities of the author. As that cannot be the case with this Letter, I must beg you to consider only the best side of, &c.

* Published by Dr. Newton, afterwards Bishop of Bristol. Notwithstanding Miss Talbot's censure, that work has gone through a great many editions, and is still much esteemed.

Mrs. CARTER* to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Jan.* 1, 1750.

I am a little ashamed of the savage figure I make in your Letter, and yet I know not well in this respect how to civilize myself. Our great people break through all the sacred authority of law, and seem to lose all sense of what is serious and decent in pursuit of French diversions, and are surrounded by French taylors, French valets, French dancing masters, and French cooks, while many of their unhappy countrymen are starving for want of employment. Our fine ladies disgrace the "human shape divine," and become helpless to themselves, and troublesome to all the world besides, with French hoops, and run into an indecent extravagance of dress, inconsistent with all rules of sober appearance, and good œconomy. Little people always follow the example of their superiors, and we† misses in the country have our

* Part of this and several other Letters was printed in the Memoirs of Mrs. Carter, relating to the translation of Epictetus.

† Though Mrs. Carter seems modestly to include herself in this philippic against the vices and follies both of town and country, it should be observed that she certainly never smuggled; and probably never paid much regard to French fashions, or French finery, at any time of her life.

heads equally turned with French fashions and French fooleries, which makes us break the law, and smuggle for the sake of getting French finery. In return for an hundred mischiefs, I do not recollect any one French invention that has been of any real benefit to this nation, and so till you have fairly convinced me that French fashions are for the good of my country, I shall not in any wise endeavour to rectify in myself the spirit of the true original British crab.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *Feb.* 4, 1750.

Having the agreeable prospect of an undisturbed half hour, I am going with great pleasure, dear Miss Carter, to employ it in conversing with you, and I am not sure after all, whether these silent, and permanent conversations have not some advantages, over the talkative ones we used to have last year. At least I would endeavour like you to make the best of every thing that cannot be helped——

An uninterrupted half hour——no, such a blessing is not to be had in this execrable town. 'Tis

'Tis inconceivable how many vexatious little jobs break in opon one's best hours, and disturb all their serenity. Jumbles, blunders, hurries, messages—— well and what then? Were but the calm retreat secured in one's own mind, had one a fortress built there with walls of solid philosophy, and a comfortable easy chair, quilted pure and soft with ease of temper, one should enjoy perfect quiet in the midst of a hurricane. I must really get some glass windows to my mind, that these swarms of musquitos may be quite shut out, while I have only the quiet amusement of speculating them through the chrystal medium. This digression was occasioned by a very provoking jumble that called me off from you and myself; but I am returned to ask you, what you mean by saying you would not leave the quiet life you now enjoy, for pomp, splendour, and gaiety? If you mean that you would not give up the exercise of domestic duties and social affections, the delight of an improved understanding, your hours of thought and employment, superior to the world, you are certainly much in the right of it. But what is there in the engagements of high and gay life, incompatible with these more rational dispositions and employments, to a mind in any tolerable degree firm in good sense, and good principles, and in any reasonable manner secure of itself? The material difference is not, as I

take

take it, whether one does spend more or fewer hours in studies (though noble and laudable, yet not necessary), but whether one preserves the fit disposition to pursue them in every moment's leisure. Now a firm mind, and an easy temper, will make the transition from high and pleasing, to common and perplexing employments, without disturbance, they will preserve all one's thoughts and ideas in such exact order, that be they ever so numerous, ever so different, none shall interfere. Circumstances you know are all but externals, and the immoveable self should be the same in all *. Therefore Miss Carter at Paris, Miss Carter with a ducal coronet on her coach, would be the same domestic, affectionate, dutiful creature, the same in love of knowledge and retirement, in the constant improvement of her mind, and in real superiority to the world, with Miss Carter at Deal in her peaceful retirement. She would, like a reasonable woman, secure to herself, every day, some hours for recollection and improvement, and would as highly enjoy every moment of leisure as she does now. And Miss Carter in a family of her own, ordering her family affairs, surrounded by her sons and daughters, drest in her plain work, fed with

* It is not often that stoic philosophy has been adorned by such elegance of expression, and by an illustration so affectionate as well as just.

her

her own plumb puddings, taught by her own care, would be still as happy and as valuable a person as either.

I believe there are many useful inventions and real improvements for which we are obliged to the French, but really I have not had time to recollect them: only so far I am sure, that I find myself much indebted to them for many excellent books. This is a reason why, as citizens of the world, we should love even French folks, and judge with candour of whatever they would introduce, but I abominate French follies as much as the veriest verjuice of you all can do. If France had not much in it of rational delight, do you think Lord Cornbury would spend so much time there? Alas! by that rule, Cornbury must, instead of a most charming, be a very undelightful place, for he has agreed to part with it for 70,000l. to the Duke of Marlborough. I am a little heart-broken about this, but upon the whole I believe it was very right and reasonable to be done.

I quite agree with you about good hours, and as much a quack as I am, I do believe exercise, air, diet, good hours, and an easy mind, to be the most sovereign medicines in the world. Adieu! &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Piccadilly, *March* 9, 1750.

After a tedious time, dear Miss Carter, I return your Epictetus with my Lord's remarks. I have had them this fortnight, but really have not had time to copy them till to-day. Oh this life of endless dissipation! Between friendship, civility, a due and necessary care of one's health, and a very moderate participation of the amusements in season, day after day flies away, without affording perhaps one hour in a week for reading, writing, or collected thought. Thus (to use Epictetus's admirable metaphor) the whole piece of society is wove. Oh that we were but purple enough to make a little bright stripe by oneself! Well, but if one does but contribute to the piece (sorry stuff though it be) one's own humble, undistinguished share, and do not make it rowy, or cockly—May one not, ought one not to be, well content? But the misfortune is that I do cockle most prodigiously, and wear vastly ill when the piece is so close struck that I have not the room to expand in, which I am used to and need. Though the things we are engaged in, be ever so innocent (says an excellent author I was reading last night) yet when they cause a perpetual dissipa-

dissipation, they must be wrong. Indeed I go to few public places, and when I walk, it is not in the Mall, but merely to breathe this balmy air, and rejoice in this continual sunshine. When I visit, except sometimes a formal round, it is friends, and valuable ones; many of them confined on some account or other, and really wanting me; but by some means or other my golden hours are all engrossed, and I cannot help feeling a perpetual dissatisfaction—feeling that my little genius was not made to take in so large a round, even of proper and laudable engagements. Yet as the way of the world is now, how can one reserve those hours of domestic leisure that one should be every way the happier, and the better for reserving? Would you believe it, that my mind was so dissipated by a week or two of innocent gaiety, and my spirits by the return of perfect health grown so flippant and lively, that I felt not the awful terrors of the second shock on Thursday, nor could bring my mind to any degree of seriousness, till the conversation of wiser and stronger minds than mine, had yesterday talked down its levity. I was when it happened in a profound sleep, from which I was awaked by my mother's screaming dreadfully. Alarmed with the thought of some more immediate home distress, the trembling of the house was over, before I could collect my thoughts to attend to it. But though there

there are some such thoughtless giddy creatures as I then was, and some there are who only amuse themselves with betting on the different force of the shocks, people in general seem a good deal struck.—Yet how soon, alas, will they be ashamed of, and disown, the transient seriousness, if (as surely is much most probable) all should end harmlessly. And were it otherwise——Alas! for the many——But tolerably good minds ought to be more serene and firm upon these great occasions. Awfully, and collectedly calm, seriously cheerful, trusting in Providence, and resigned to it. Alas! was Lima—was poor Catanea*—more profligate than this town is now? But

Soumise avec respect, a la volonté sainte,
Ie crains Dieu, chère Elise, et n'ai point d'autre crainte†.

* The dreadful catastrophe of those two flourishing cities is well known.

† Altered from Racine's *Athalie.*

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Piccadilly, *April* 3, 1750.

I have, my dear Miss Carter, been spending three days out of town with a party, that, by making me too happy for the time, exhausted all the spirits I had, and left me as flat and insipid as all high pleasures do. So 'tis neither Canterbury nor Carshalton that will do—nothing external, as Epictetus would say—The foundation of cheerfulness, and tranquillity, must be in a mind collected in itself, and when one suffers that to be dissipated, with vain envy one shall look on the stoical dye, to which every situation is alike: and expeditions thus delightful, prove Solomon's old discovery of the vanity and vexation of spirit, mixed up with every enjoyment of this mortal life. Alas! to what purpose do we live, filled with endless desires of mending every body and every thing around us—poor self is forgot—The only person we could have any real influence over: and so, the great reformer of the age does not even take care of One. These are discouraging kind of reflections, that ought not perhaps to be indulged, but to day I am particularly inclined to take such dissatisfying views of life, when, anxious to preserve it, young and old, happy

and wretched, are all hurrying out of town, on the dreadful, though I trust idle expectation of some fate impending over it to-morrow and Thursday. The gloom that hangs over this town, and will hang over it for some days, induced me to return, that my mother might not be left to encounter it alone, while I was gay and happy, as the most delightful place and society could make me. 'Tis surely an idle gloom—the supposition of any body's being able to fix a day for such awful events, is strangely absurd; but disbelieve it as much as one will, a more than usual degree of seriousness will sit upon one's mind. There is a poor madman *, belonging to Lord Delawar's regiment, who has prophesied a thousand shocking things, and to hear them hawked about this morning almost chilled me; there was something horrid in it, though the only real horror belonging to it, is the pain it must give to weak low-spirited people—That I may not sink

* The first of these earthquakes, the most severe that was ever felt in London, happened on the 8th of February; the second on the 8th of March; and this enthusiast prophesied that there would be a third on that day four weeks (the 5th of April) which would destroy the whole of London and Westminster. The Editor's mother was then in London, and used to describe the terror and confusion which this prediction caused, much in the same manner as Miss Talbot has done in these Letters.

your's,

your's, by a Letter written at so critical a juncture, it shall not go till Friday.

I wish I could give you a more satisfactory account of Mrs. Cockburn's book*; it will not be out this twelvemonth, and I am assured it will be much benefited by the delay, as they are collecting from all parts of the world Letters and papers of value. Poor Lord Dalkeith†, a man beloved by all who knew him, is dead, after a two days' illness, and left a wife, such as in these days is not often met with, excellent in every sense of the word; their perfect happiness was such as one delights to see any where, but I fear there are few instances in high life of such virtuous domestic happiness as theirs; she was gay at Court on Sunday noon. Her sister, poor Lady Mary Coke, has in him lost by a third sudden stroke, the third of her best friends, this sad winter.

> "The spiders most attenuated thread,
> Is cord, is cable, to the tender tye
> On human bliss: it breaks with every breeze."

* It was published in the following year in two volumes octavo.

† Son of the last, and father to the present Duke of Buccleugh. He married Caroline, eldest daughter of John, Duke of Argyle; she was created Baroness Greenwich, and remarried to the Hon. Charles Townshend.

April 5.

The Ides of March are come—but till they are gone too, you shall not have this. On the poltroonery of a vile and wicked people! This poor madman hath set about such an alarm, that yesterday the whole town was in hourly expectation of destruction. The churches were full all the morning; but at night the streets and open places were crowded. Many messages came hither to enquire where my Lord preached, and whether there were not to be prayers in the church at eleven. Thousands spent the night in Hyde Park, and Lincoln's Inn Fields. Those who did the least, sat up half the night, except some very few. The moon, stars, and aurora, were well contemplated—But there is something frightful in such a general panic. Once (when the rebels were expected) this spirit of cowardice, had not a gracious Providence interposed, must have been very fatal to this town. 'Tis grievous to think of the scenes of distress, among good, though weak people, which last night was witness to. All Sunday they were crying about, *The Bishop of London's prayer proper for all christian families, against the earthquake that is to be on Thursday morn.* The King and Prince have done all they could to check this wildness of fear. I hope it has now spent itself, but if it has, what grief to think that minds so susceptible of strong impressions,

sions, should have been thus affected, by such a foolish cause, that they must be ashamed of it, and perhaps of all serious and right impressions along with it! So from the vilest credulity, we shall I fear see them running into an utter disregard of every thing they ought to reverence and believe. I was happy to learn from Mr. Wright that Miss Peggy Carter has not suffered by these alarms.

One of my studies lately has been Boileau. There is an epitre of his against la mauvaise honte, which has some noble lines in it, but has left so very much of the subject untouched, and the subject is, in this age especially, so important, that I wish I could see an *Ode to Wisdom* upon it; when I say an Ode to Wisdom, I imitate the French phrase, who to express an excellent joint of mutton, call it, in their bills of fare, *un rost beef de mouton.* Adieu. Don't you see I am got into better spirits? The Bishop of Oxford is so long in returning you Epictetus, that you might really en attendant improve upon Boileau, were it but in half a dozen stanzas. My mother joins in the request; 'tis the only bouquet you can send her by the post. Drinking, Gaming, Irreligion, Idleness, Extravagance, Impudence—all, all, in many unhappy wretches, the product of false shame. After all, far be it from me to put you to a second task;

so

so pray do not mind any thing I say, except the assurance of my being, &c.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *April* 28, 1750.

I have, dear Miss Talbot, to thank you for your Letter, which I have deferred something the longer in hopes of being able to send you an Ode, but to my utter mortification, I have found such an Ode full as impracticable a task as if you had enjoined me to fall in love and write pastorals. But as I cannot with any tranquillity bear giving up a task set me by Mrs. and Miss Talbot, some time or other another trial must be made, if it be in utte defiance of genius and poetry.

The relation you were so good as to give me of the utter and strange consternation that people have been in from a lunatic prediction, is such a one as I could not receive from any one but yourself, and I am extremely obliged to you for it. What an amazing quantity of credulity is there in the world! A bottle conjurer *, a madman, any thing but the

* This celebrated imposition on the public credulity occurred in January 1749, the preceding year.

true

true and rational objects of belief, are sure to be swallowed without the least examination. No doubt there are a great many of the runaways that deserve great compassion; ignorance and weak spirits are pitiable cases, but that those who have no such excuses should imagine it was in the power of any mortal to fix a day for the destruction of a city by an earthquake, seems strangely unaccountable, but from such principles as one is grieved to think on. Your venturing yourself in the midst of this general consternation, was acting suitable to your character, and in the way which, when I heard of the universal preparation for flight, I pleased myself with knowing you would act. There is an inexpressible delight, in seasons when one hears that all the world is running mad, to reflect upon certain characters who one feels assured will preserve their senses, and behave in a proper and becoming manner.

I have been much engaged lately with some friends of Mrs. Dorby's; to be sure it is a good thing to be put out of one's own way sometimes, and these visits truly have cost me many a disconcerted trial. I never could divest myself of my idiot look, and having been for some time disused to forms and ceremonies, 'tis rather worse, and I appear like a wild thing just caught; and yet, bating that I am a goose, they seemed to be good-hu-

moured sociable people, notwithstanding a vast deal of French and finery. In the midst of all these little foolish flutters, I bless myself at being born in a situation which so very seldom exposes me to them. 'Tis perhaps a trifling circumstance, but trifling circumstances heartily applied go a good way towards making up the sum of one's happinesses. As contented, however, as I may be with my manner of life, other people do not seem to think it a life to be contented with. A good old gentleman, to whom I am greatly indebted, has proposed a great variety of schemes to me, which, for ought I know, may be very advantageous, but have no attractions for me. To give up one's ease and liberty, and be under perpetual restraint, for the sake of wearing a finer gown, eating a greater variety of dishes, or seeing more company and fewer friends, appears to me a very strange scheme. I have shewed these proposals to my father, and he is so good as to leave me to my own choice, which is the very situation in which I am. People who have neither ambition nor avarice are little troubled with unreal wants, and nothing else is a temptation to voluntary dependance. When I was in the world, its employments, or perhaps amusements, always had their attractions for me, as well as the more quiet life I now lead in retirement. But I am a trifler, and trifles were admirably well adapted

to

to me; the world and I were upon very good terms. But this is no reason you should be so, who can find nothing in its whole system of bagatelles capable of fixing ideas like your's. You are much too wise not to be happy, but to be at all *égayée* by the flutter which so agreeably engages those, who, to be kept in good-humour, must be diverted. As truly admirable as such a state of mind is, as seems to need very little external aid to contribute to its entertainment, its refinement may be sometimes carried too far; it may regard with rather too great a degree of dissatisfaction and contempt the amusements of which it perceives no want in itself, and may, from the right use it makes of its own powers, be too apt to expect, and disappointed not to find, in the generality of mankind, that strict exercise of reason, which can belong but to a very few; and great benevolence renders that disappointment so painful, that it often too much inclines those who are best qualified for the amendment of society to run away from it. After all, the men and women of this world must have their rattles and their playthings, and the only way by which people of superior talents can hope to make them wiser and better, is by condescending to play with them. Remember that Socrates and Plato frequented all the routs, visiting rooms, and raree-

shows in Athens, or they would never have gained so many proselytes to virtue.

One would think, by the comfortable domestic scenes into which you introduce me, that you had Lovelace's tombstone in your eye. One part of your description I can answer, for children I have, and though I say it, who should not say it, four as fine children as need be desired. They are not indeed fed with my own plumb-pudding, because I have not any to give them; but as far as they have any appetite for the slender diet of learning, all I have in the world is much at their service.

In an inconsiderate hour I borrowed Mariana's History of Spain, which consists of more volumes than I had courage to tell, or shall probably get through before I wear spectacles. I believe he would have been a very sensible writer if he had not been a papist; but 'tis surprising into what ridiculous stories the prejudices of bigotry and superstition often lead him. Adieu, &c.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Piccadilly, *April* 28, 1750.

I HAVE got such an odd whim in my head, dear Miss Carter, that whatever odd questions I ask, you must not be surprized. Are you well and in spirits? Might you, could you, would you come to Canterbury, only for a day or two, on Tuesday, May 8th? What is the best inn at Canterbury? What sort of road is it from there to Dover? How far from Dover to Deal? and what sort of road? and from Deal to Canterbury? I must have a plain direct answer to all my odd questions, and that too by the very next post.

But after all, it is not fair to put you into so violent a puzzle about nothing, so trusting to your discretion, I will tell you the whole scheme, and own fairly what is the fear that made my first page so mysterious. You must know, that the Bishop of Oxford has long been so good as to talk of carrying me to see one of those great objects in nature which one ought certainly not to be unacquainted with, the sea. Portsmouth was a place named, but let the view from Post Down be never so fine, I must confess, when the determination was left to me, I could not help determining, that the pleasantest

santest view of it must needs be some place in the neighbourhood of Deal. Our scheme therefore is, to set out on Monday, May the 7th, for Rochester, and be met by you at the best inn in Canterbury on Tuesday evening; on Wednesday we propose to visit Dover and Dover Cliffs. From thence on Thursday to dine at Deal, and carry you back to Canterbury, if you have no objection, and on Friday back to Rochester. The Monday following I go to Wrest with Lady Grey, and on Wednesday se'nnight after I hope we shall set out for the summer to Cuddesden. Pray did you ever see such a pretty nest of schemes? However, this is not so bad as scheming for years, like the wise ones of this world, whose wisdom is so often cut short.

But our Canterbury party may, and must be hindered, if you are not so discreet towards your own family, and so frank to us, as to prevent our being any trouble to them, which is the only thing we are apprehensive of. I know all the civil things that are said on such occasions, but the truth is, we had much rather lodge at an inn than at any friend's house. 'Tis much less hurry and bustle to them and to oneself in such parties as this, and therefore you must be so kind as to tell me how, in our own way, our scheme can be best managed, with least hurry, least embarras, and fewest fears. I may have your answer on Wednesday; and if

this

this can be any perplexity or inconvenience to you, tell me so fairly, and we will go to Portsmouth this time. But if you encourage us to come to Canterbury, consider whether you have any commands we can execute, or any parcels we can bring. I hope you are fond of *the Ramblers*.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *April* 30, 1750.

To be sure, like Sir Paul in the play, I do not know whether I "fly upon the ground or walk in the air," I am so transported, dear Miss Talbot, with your few odd questions, to which I will most joyfully give you the best answers in my power. In the first place, I will infallibly, if I live and prosper, meet you on Tuesday, May the 8th, at the *King's Head* (the post-house) in Canterbury. The road from thence to Dover I never travelled, but my brother assures me 'tis a very good one. The inn to which all strangers go there is the *Ship*. From Dover to Deal is eight miles, a good road, excepting the hill, which may be walked up, and there is a beautiful romantic prospect from the top

of it. From Deal to Canterbury is sixteen miles, a most excellent road.

Indeed I will be prodigiously good and discreet, and will take care as much as possible that your scheme may be perfectly in your own way. I will not proclaim it all over Canterbury, that my lord will be there on Tuesday, in order to have him way-laid by Deans, Prebendaries, and Archdeacons, and exposed to an hundred oppositions to his arriving quietly at the King's Head. Moreover, I will be extremely peaceable, and not put my own family in any kind of uproar, even at Deal; though it would not be in my power to be so tractable if my father was at home; but just before I received your Letter he was set out on his way to London, which I am very sorry for, and so will he.

I am infinitely obliged to you for preferring the view of the sea from Deal beach to that from Post Down. I have no commissions, no pacquets, nor think of any thing at present but the pleasure of travelling with you over the face of this country.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

London, *May* 14, 1750.

After such a week as the last, to whose pleasantness dear Miss Carter so much and so kindly contributed, it would be unpardonable not to write you a line at least of thanks, and to tell you how happily we have got to the end of our little expedition, and how well we are after it. What way shall I find to express in three words the pleasure the last week has given us all. How much I like, love, and value all your friends, children, and relations! how much obliged we are for letting us see so many of them! What sort of a walk had you home? How do you and Captain Carter do, after all the trouble and fatigue we gave you both? Dr. Carter looked weary when we met him; I hope he is not the worse for his journey.

How I could dwell on the beauties of your favourite country, even more pleasing on a second view than on a first. Then when I come to talk of Greenwich—Did you ever see it? It was quite a new world to me, and a very charming one. Only on the top of a most inaccessible hill in the park, just as we were arrived at a view that we had long been aiming at, a violent clap of thunder burst over

over our heads. My mother set to running like lightening down the steepest path, and thankful I am we all got safe to the bottom. My lord then got up with her, and took hold of her arm, but he avers that she hurried him along as easily as a large ship tows a little boat.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *May* 21, 1750.

How shall I sufficiently thank you, dear Miss Talbot, for the pleasure your expedition into Kent has given me? You can have no idea of the kind of happiness I have felt at seeing you at a place, where I imagined myself out of the reach of every friend and acquaintance I had in the world, beyond the distance of twenty miles. You were very good in letting me know you got safe and well to your journey's end, and I please myself with thinking on the honourable mention Mrs. Talbot will make of our Kentish roads.

I had hoped to have spent the remainder of Friday very agreeably, talking about those with whom I had been so very happy for some days; but Mrs. Talbot is as good at diagnostics as Dr. Ratcliffe,

Ratcliffe, and knew the state of my head better than I did, for when she mentioned it I only perceived a heaviness, but very soon after it grew quite outrageous, and instead of spending the evening at Dr. Lynch's, I was drove to bed by such an impertinent fever as would not even let me think of you, at least you could only find a place among Dr. Watts' group of " green dragons, bears, and ghosts." I had a most formidable idea of being sick in a land overrun with physicians, and not like Deal flowing with tar-water. Mrs. Hall's good and kind nursing soon set me me right, and on Thursday I came home, where I found that you had won the hearts of all who had had the happiness of seeing you. Adieu for the present.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *May* 28, 1750.

This is to thank you, dear Miss Carter, and to tell you how sincerely I have been grieved about your fever, which I fear we hurried you into, but rejoice you are well again.

The Vision is much approved with its present preface, and will make an excellent *Rambler* *, only it is wished there were something added. Being writ with the sole intention of raising depressed spirits into cheerful gratitude, wrong-headed people may draw inferences from it favourable to a life of mere amusement and good-humour; therefore now that it is intended for general use, something should be mentioned of the serious and active duties of life, and its proper restraints; and a caution given, lest by too entirely attending to the duty of enjoying a beautiful world, people should neglect the government and improvement of the heart, and miss the happiness that is intended them. The poem on Melancholy †, with a Greek motto, is also wished to be sent to the Rambler.

I had much talk about you this morning with the Bishop of Gloucester, and was naming to him Mr. Duncombe's schemes ‡. He approves none but that of some in the Prince's-court. But this, though I spoke of it very slightly, he seemed much pleased with; so much so, that I cannot help tell-

* See No. 44 of that work.

† Written in 1739. See p. 369, quarto edition.

‡ None of these schemes ever took place. Mrs. Carter had an invincible dislike to the confinement which must have attended such a situation. See her Letter on that subject, printed in her Memoirs, p. 124, quarto edition.

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ing you what he said. I thought it would be only vexatious imprisonment, but he assures me quiet people may live there as quietly as they will, may have an opportunity of doing good and gaining interest, may be as much at liberty in town as they wish, and see their friends in the country sometimes, and except some few stated times of attendance, have time enough upon their hands. If this be so, it may be worth while to talk a little more to Mr. D. and see what place he has in his head for you.

You see the author of the Rambler need not be put upon writing papers of amusement, as he takes to it of himself; but he ought to be cautioned to admit the Letters of his Correspondents with much care and choice, and if one might say so, not to to use over many hard words. This must be said with great care. In yesterday's paper (a very pretty one indeed) we had *equi-ponderant*, and another so hard I cannot remember it, both in one sentence. Your Vision and your Verses will do more good than advice. However, when he writes papers of humour, there are many odd clubs, advertisements, societies, meetings, and devices of various kinds, which this age produces; and London swarms with what would afford as amusing subjects as any in the Spectator. The Marrying Register, the Threepenny Club in Essex-street, a

most

most universal nursery of low infidel orators; the Threepenny Masquerades, numberless follies and enormities. But these places should not be writ about without most particular enquiries, easily made in London.

I am much pleased with Mr. Cave's * account of the approbation this excellent paper has met with amongst some of the fine world. Any hint that is known to come from you will have great weight with the Rambler, if I guess him right, particularly given in that delicate manner you so well understand.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *July* 13, 1750.

I ought, dear Miss Talbot, before this to have acknowledged the favour of you Letter, but want of time must plead my excuse, a complaint I was never so sensible of as in this last twelvemonth. My children keep me in pretty constant employ till three o'clock, and this fine

* The celebrated bookseller. He first introduced Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Carter to each other.

weather

weather we usually form some party for the afternoon. You cannot imagine what odd, good-humoured sociable kind of things these parties of ours are, which give us a very complete enjoyment of this charming country, as most of us are good walkers, and have no objection to the full blaze of July. However, there is always a led chariot, to which no mortal is constant but Mr. Burton, who is too fat and too lazy ever to walk, and too good-natured not to suffer very quietly the being squeezed to death as often as any of the company happen to grow weary, whom he takes up by twos and threes, and as soon as they are tired, takes up a new succession. We generally drink tea in some village or at a lone farm-house, and by this method of rambling discover a thousand beauties which would be unobserved in a more regular scheme. Our last expedition was of a different kind, by water to the Isle of Thanet; a way of travelling to which it would have been difficult to seduce Mrs. Burton or me, if we had not been flattered with the promise of rowing close by the shore; but to the great dejection of our hearts, if not of our faces, the sailors urged so many good reasons for driving us into the main sea as there was no resisting. However, the day was very pleasant, for our good genius raised such a wind while we were at Ramsgate as rendered it too imprudent to return by the

way

way we came. As nobody had been so lucky as to think of putting Mr. Burton's chariot and horses into the boat, there was a good deal of comical distress about getting home, as eleven miles were rather too far at once for most of the company. At length we got a coach and chaise to convey them by sixes and sevens as far as Sandwich, and a couple of guides to instruct me in the road on foot. For four or five miles the path is along the edge of the cliff, not quite so formidable and giddy as the opposite one at Dover, but has the advantage of a much finer view of the sea, for the prospect takes in the whole extent between the two forelands. The other side of the walk consists of corn-fields, but the general look of the country, which is usually represented as very beautiful, disappointed me; there is nothing of the riant, good-humoured, sociable air that strikes one along the road from Deal to Canterbury; there was no appearance of a village, and one scarcely sees a cottage. After leaving the cliff the road is absolutely dreary and uncomfortable, through low, flat lands, covered with a miserable, dirty-looking grass, which in spring tides is all overflown by the sea. After two miles travelling through this wretched waste I was very glad to rejoin my companions, and we all walked home together.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Cuddesden, *Sept.* 28, 1750.

I am ashamed of myself, dear Miss Carter, but my time goes at a suprizing rate, and nothing seems to be done. A long ride sweeps away all the morning, and then I prowl about the garden. After this I determine, like Pyrrhus, to sit down and enjoy myself, write, read, and be quiet. But then Anne Such-a-one has brought a pound of spinning, there is a new brood of chickens just hatched, Phillis is ill, powders must be weighed out, or Shaw consulted; Flora wants to talk to me; Polly or Dicky are good children, and I must gather a posie to reward them. Thus is unsteady idleness blown out of its path by every breath. I am convinced that this way of annihilating time is very wrong, yet from day to day delay to amend; but seriously I will set about it after we return from the Oxford races; for I must think, that one's very irregularities ought to be regular, and that the most broken hours ought to be formed into a kind of scheme, for want of which one lives sadly at random. Pray how do you like the life of Lady Bustle's family? I think that is a paper of much humour, and there might be many more of

the same sort in different ways. But what Mr. Johnson most excels in is the serious papers, that seem to flow from his heart, and from a heart amiable and delicate to a great degree. The second of Euphelia is far-fetched and unnatural.

Pray let me know that you are quite well. Such people as you ought not to be ill—so one is apt to think, but all is ordered for the best and wisest of purposes. However, if I could write Latin I should certainly end this as Tully does his, with V. B. (is not it?) * as I cannot, let me only end it with all manner of good wishes.

Cuddesden, *Oct.* 20, 1750.

I PROMISED you an hour's visit dear Miss Carter, au premier jour, but in our present state of packing, you must have it by five minutes at a time, just to desire you will take care of your-

* Had Mrs. Carter answered this query, her accuracy (which was such that she was seldom wrong when she gave an opinion) would have prevented the necessity of this note. The Editor's recollection fails him if V. B. does end Cicero's Epistles; at least, often or usually. If it does, they are probably the initials of *vive beatus* (or *beata*), "live and be happy." *Farewell.*

self

self this sharp weather. Exercise will to be sure be necessary, and air of all cordials (but two, a good consience and a good friend) the most sovereign, but you must with your rheumatism avoid being pinched. As for us, we brave the frost and winds, and ride over the hills every morning, which I do not without moralizing much on the half hour's severe aching of one's fingers at first setting out, which insensibly wears off, and leaves one rejoicing in the benefits of exercise and the glories of sunshine, purchased by this little transitory hardship at first. And this finger-ache of life will be well over with a little patience, and bring us into such a sunshine as the Archbishop of Cambray describes in his Elysian fields. Hitherto indeed my path has been almost all sunny and flowery, scarce a shade to chequer it.—How many things there are, considering the frame of our nature, and the numberless errors it is liable to on every side, one does not dare or suffer one's thoughts to run out upon at all. It would be ingratitude not to think often, and thankfully acknowledge, how happy I am, and have always been. But to presume on a continuance of such happiness, how dangerous! To look forward to melancholy changes of the scene, how gloomy, how distrustful! Yet what am I that my lot should be such as it is? Do not answer that question, for

you are partial to me, much too partial. All we have to do is to take as true a view of the present as we can, and cheerfully trust Providence with the future, endeavouring to have our minds prepared for all events and situations. You will think I am in a mighty reasoning, speculative humour, and so I am. My morning walking book has been lately the second volume of Dr. Hartley *. There are among the few things I have been able to understand in it some most excellent, some in which with greatly straining my eyes I can just have a distant glimpse of some very noble and engaging truth, but am ready most joyfully to turn them on objects nearer and more distinct; and consider with pleasure, that however useful these fine boundless views and lofty speculations are to raise and enlarge the mind, still all that essentially regards our duty and our happiness lies nearer home, is plain and practical. That the great truths we are most concerned in are so familiarised, so brought down to the level of human capacities, is a thought that fills me with the utmost thankfulness, when my mind has been bewildering itself in difficult subjects; an exercise

* A very good man, but reckoned an obscure writer. Perhaps Miss Talbot was alluding to his Treatise on the Millennium.

indeed

indeed that I do not often give it, and when I do, barely (as I walk up a hill before breakfast) to keep it in breath.

Lady Mary Gregory has been at Oxford all this year. You can have no notion what a high idea and esteem she has for you. The Rambler is to me very entertaining. The Letter from Mr. Frolick has a strain of humour, and the last from Rhodoclea will, if he makes use of it, give him an excellent opportunity to introduce humourous descriptions of, and reflections on, the London follies and diversions, of which she may be supposed to write him the sentiments of her full heart, sometimes rejoiced, sometimes mortified and disappointed. Then another should write by way of contrast, who voluntarily spends her's or his in the country, rationally enjoys it, describes its frosty prospects, land or sea, its Christmas mirth, joy, and hospitality. Mr. Johnson would, I fear, be mortified to hear that people know a paper of his own by the sure mark of somewhat a little excessive, a little exaggerated in the expression. In his Screech Owl * were *so many* merchants discouraged, *so many* ladies killed, matches broke, poets dismayed! The numbers are too large. Two or three—five or six, is enough in all conscience

* See *Rambler*, No. 59.

in

in most cases. 'Tis else like the Jewish way of speaking, who to express a man's being rich, say he has 800 ships at sea, and 800 cities on the land. Pray how do you like Pindar? The Greek one I mean, I like the English one vastly; but fear they are far different. Adieu!

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Oct.* 26, 1750.

Pray dear Miss Talbot, what is this platonic heresy of which you accuse me? I expect to hear it proved more clearly than that annihilation of time of which you accuse yourself, a charge which though you wrote it, is one of the most completely absurd things I ever read, and set me a staring for half an hour to find out the meaning, when after all I could not discover any one article in the whole description, that a person of plain understanding could twist or torture to such a perverse interpretation as you put upon it. The spirit of controversy seems to be at present in me, and I am determined with a laudable firmness to vindicate the only character you ever take it into

into your head to treat unjustly. First then, that same ride and walk in the garden, of which you express yourself in such discontented fashion, as sweeping away the whole of the morning, I deem no other than a necessary means for a cheerful enjoyment of the rest of the day. Of all considerations, next to a good conscience, surely health is the most important, as it is the sine qua non (if you talk absurdities I will talk Latin) not only of every comfort, but of all the active duties of life. Then in attendance upon Polly, and Flora, and Phillis. To make any thing of this charge, one could not help at the first view suspecting you had given your mind over to playing with kittens, but seeing that you have assigned them such employments and characters as exceed the capacity of any kittens that occur in history, one is at last obliged to conclude that they are human creatures. Now is there any one person in the world, except the injured one I am defending, whom you would have stigmatized with the title of *unsteady idleness*, for an attention to the virtue, the health, and the happiness of the more helpless part of mankind? In any other case you would have allowed such an employment to have been a very profitable, and very noble use of time, and would have agreed that the deepest theories, and most sublime contemplations, have not half the merit of that active social

virtue

virtue that generously exerts itself for the good of others. I should be glad to see the plan of that reform in the management of time that you seem to think so necessary, though I am inclined to believe that after all your researches, it will be very difficult to find a more laudable scheme than that which you treat with such a severity of censure and reproach.

There are indeed some things upon which one does not dare suffer one's thoughts to run out, nor does it seem at all necessary they should. Philosophers indeed, and I believe some divines teach us that to take a view of the worst alterations that may happen in our circumstances, is a means to bear them with the greater calmness; but I am inclined to think that real misfortunes when they do come to pass, are not rendered at all the lighter from people having tormented themselves by thinking on them a considerable time beforehand, and damped every cheerful enjoyment of present blessings by looking forward to their loss. To keep the mind under an habitual dependance upon Providence, and a proper sense of the duty of submission and resignation in general, seems to be quite sufficient, without exercising the thoughts in painful foretastes of any particular trial to which one may be probably exposed. With regard to our happiness in this world, the more closely our thoughts are confined

to

to the present day, the better *; whenever they are sent out to wander too far beyond it, the mind is soon lost and confused in the darkness and variety of human events, and distracted by the tumult of hopes and fears. Nor is there any point of the future in which it can quietly and securely repose, unless it passes by all the hurry and perturbation of time, and extends its views at once to eternity.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Piccadilly, *Nov.* 26, 1750.

I was growing a little uneasy about you, dear Miss Carter, before your Letter came, but I am rejoiced to find that both Dr. Carter and yourself are better, you have all our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Do not imagine I have been so vain as to attempt understanding half Dr. Hartley's book, though I believe it would be well worth while if one could. A book I have picked up since I came here, and

* "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," Matt. vi. 34.—In that book will be found the key to all Mrs. Carter's philosophy.

am

am very much pleased with is Duncan Forbes's Reflections on Incredulity. By the nobleness and goodness of the sentiments, and the genteel elegance of style (though not absolutely correct) it is calculated I think to do good among the fine folks. Did I tell you at Cuddesden we were reading Mr. West's Pindar *? It is, as he has made it, a most charming book, but they tell me he has translated it, as you would have done, harmonizing, and embellishing his original extremely. I am now reading Memoires de la maison de Brandebourg par main de Maître. Supposed to be the King of Prussia's, writ with spirit, archness, profligacy, and pedantry. When I say profligacy, I mean that he speaks with a monstrous slightness of the Reformation, the persecution of the French protestants, and other matters that deserve a very different kind of treatment †.

* Gilbert West published his translation of Pindar in one volume quarto, in the preceding year. It is perhaps to the credit of the world, that notwithstanding the acknowledged elegance and sufficient accuracy of this translation, he is more known as the author of the celebrated "Observations on the Resurrection," published two years before.

† The King of Prussia's character is now better known, and his coldness on these subjects has long ceased to excite any surprize.

In

In a list of the curiosities found in all these years at Herculaneum, I find nothing extraordinary but a silver roll, in an estui, writ all over with Greek Letters, which the King of Sicily has locked up safe. And a pye that had been in the oven 1000 years.

I have been but at two public places. The court ball on the 19th, where Miss Carpenter shone out in more beauty than ever, and is more in fashion than ever. I rejoice in this extremely; not as looking upon such fluttering admiration to be of any real good or any sort of advantage; but as it proves that beauty supported by sweetness, ingenuity, and goodness of character, will always be new, and always amiable, even in the giddy crowd. Nothing makes people tired of a fine face, but a want of something in the mind and character to answer expectation, or its being seen in ill chosen company, or indeed its being seen always every where in that idle fluttering way, that makes half the fine faces in England old and neglected in a twelvemonth.

My other amusement was going to see "Much ado about Nothing," which has always been one of my favourite comedies, as surely a most excellent vein of pleasantry runs through the whole. It was incomparably acted, and I know not when we have spent so laughing an evening. Of my studies at present,

present, I can give you no very good account; not that I think them in their way (and if one reads them backwards like a witch's prayer) unuseful ones. I am deep in some books of French, Morale Mondaine, which I should be glad to see burnt at Tyburn. They are full of a systematical profligateness, veiled with delicacy of expression, and a sort of metaphysical refinement that must make them infinitely mischievous. Our bad books (our grossly bad ones) which they are most eagerly translating and reading in France, the very worst of them will only make bad people worse, but theirs which we read untranslated here, will make harmless people bad. I am told that they are English-mad at Paris, and that let ever so many English or Irish set up there to teach the language, they are overpowered with the number of their scholars. They are too as fond of our tabbies, stuffs, fans, and ribbands, as ever we were of their gauzes and tinsel.

AEEEILYWK. To range these nine Letters so as to make six words well spelt, is a fashionable amusement; but do not I beseech you, employ your own time and brains or any body's else that could be better employed, in this idle puzzle. I only sent it, because dull as I think this species of ingenuity, I have known the time when one has been obliged to it, for helping off a heavy moment.

MRS.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Dec.* 1, 1750.

I have, dear Miss Talbot, read a little of Pindar, and perhaps should be ashamed to own, he did not to me by any means answer the magnificent testimonies given him by other authors, and I cannot help thinking it much to his credit that you are reading Mr. West. One reason perhaps why I am not very fond of Pindar, may be, I have very little taste for horse races, and might perhaps have been better pleased, if he had described the agility of damsels running for a shift. Have you seen a copy of verses on thunder and lightening in Feb.-44. If not I must send them you, for I am persuaded they will delight you. I have just heard from a person lately arrived from Portugal, that poor Clarissa, to complete the sum of her misfortunes, has been carried to Lisbon, and put into the Inquisition!

I have finished two more chapters of Epictetus, and send them you by way of antidote to your Morale Mondaine! We have a book introduced here, which I fancy, by Mrs. Burton's account, who is extremely scandalized at it, is of much the same sort as that you mention, and is written by

the Marquis d'Argens. One need not however be afraid of it's doing any great mischief here. The people of Deal content themselves with plain practical sins, and never trouble their heads about speculative refinements upon wickedness, so I believe neither the Marquis d'Argens nor any other writers of his class will do the least harm. Much harm however they certainly do in the world, and I heartily join in your wish that all such books were publicly burnt at Tyburn as teach people to be wicked under a colour of argument and principle—Now I am talking of books, I have upon the strength of your recommendation ventured again to look into Dr. Hartley; I was at first sufficiently puzzled with *vibrations*, but *vibratiunculas* are beyond all mortal sufferance, and for any thing I am likely to learn by this part of the book, it would be as much to my profit to read the history of Parismus and Parismenus. After all

> In vain we search the wondrous cause to find
> How mind on body, body acts on mind.

(with many more quotations and quotatiunculas which might be alledged to the same purpose) and all hopotheses about it seem equally perplexed and ineffectual. But however unsatisfactory these kind of systems may be, they are by no means to be treated

treated with contempt. They are the result of great powers of understanding and strong habits of thinking; and an ingenious author who means well, is to be indulged in some few harmless whims, as it often happens (in a way which perhaps it may be impossible for all vibrations and vibratiuncula in the world to account for) that obscure, and even in themselves useless speculations, lead to the discovery of evident and important truths. By the titles of some of Dr. Hartley's chapters, I promise myself great pleasure in the more intelligible parts of his works, and am determined in spite of all my difficulties, if I have time, to persevere to the end of it. Do you know any thing of Mrs. Cockburn's works? Or do you know any thing of a Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, who is publishing by subscription? One or two of her poems were printed in the last Magazine. For the edification of some of my young friends, we read one of them on the art of coquetry, at which they were much scandalized. The poetry is uncommonly correct, but the doctrine indeed by no means to be admired. It is intolerably provoking to see people who really appear to have a genius, apply it to such idle unprofitable purposes.

Rambler?

I admire your serenity amidst the rains and winds of November, with a warm coach over your head; but what do you think of wayfaring people who must trudge through a dirty world on foot?—Why they

they certainly ought to be very thankful they have feet to walk on. I am become extremely valorous, and defy all kind of weather by the assistance of what till this winter I used to look at with great contempt, a long riding hood; this is a great humiliation to my vanity, and I begin to be under some sort of apprehension that in another year I shall want spectacles*. Be so good in your next to explain the puzzle you sent me, for it is absolutely beyond the reach of my capacity to find out.

Miss TALBOT to Mrs. CARTER.

Piccadilly, *Dec.* 17, 1750.

Here we are still, dear Miss Carter, and I begin to have great hopes we shall not remove from this familiar house, and this sociable friendly quarter, till the primroses of April invite us to Cuddesden. My Lord has no successor yet named †, and if that successor should not perversely

* She lived, however, to her 89th year without ever using them.

† To the rectory of St. James, Piccadilly, which the Bishop resigned, together with his stall at Durham, for the deanery of St. Paul's.

set

set his heart upon turning us out of doors directly, it does really seem rational enough that we should stay on a few months longer, especially as there is a very happy reason that would make long jumbles particularly unfit for Lady Grey, and that will make one particularly wish to be near her. You will, I am sure, be much pleased with the thoughts of such a one as her bringing an heir to such a family. 'Tis a happiness which her calm and resigned temper never suffered her to be anxious about, but surely there is a prospect of its being a great one, since I think any children of her's would be educated in a very different way from the fine folks of this world, and consequently be of more use in it, and their beings more valuable. Alas! how many come into the world for no purpose at all, or indeed worse than none, only to be contemptible, wretched, and mischievous. There is however, a little rising generation that I contemplate with pleasure, as I know three or four excellent mothers of future Dukes and Earls, that take the most serious care of their large little families. I spent yesterday evening with two young Countesses, and was delighted to hear them comparing the tempers and capacities of their children, and how they read their book, and said their catechisms.

Do not suspect me of having ever got so far in Dr. Hartley as the *vibrationunculettinettos;* I only

read the most taking title pages; and in the second volume I am sure you will find many things to be charmed with, and many a hint that is big with infinite and noble meditations; but at the same time you will find some so very liable to do mischief among wrong headed, or wrong hearted people, that you will not be sorry they are so hedged round from common view with thorny and insuperable difficulties. I mentioned this book rather as a school of excellent thoughts than a complete thing in itself, like what the painters call a studio, a heap of sketches, some of them very strange, that well studied might produce the most admirable pieces.

Mr. Richardson has been so good as to call on us twice. Pray send me in mere hints your idea of the good and agreeable man, whom every body wants him to draw, but he must resolutely refuse to fight a duel—how then must he shew (without romantic adventures, or a red coat, which must not be neither) his fighting bravery? When I say hints, I mean such as these—firm—goodnatured—passionate—perverse mistress—friendly—&c. &c. or as much more detaillé as you please.

Pray who and what is Miss Mulso*? She writes very well, and corresponds with you and Mr.

* Well known, and much respected afterwards under the name of Mrs. Chapone. Her Letters have been published lately.

Richardson.

Richardson. I honour her, and want to know more about her. I wish most violently you was in town, for I have set my whole heart upon the success of the Rambler (what a noble paper his last upon death) and you could talk more persuasively to the author than any body. Mr. Cave complains of him for not admitting correspondents; this does mischief. In the main I think he is to be applauded for it. But why then does he not write now and then on the living manners of the times?—The stage,—the follies and fashions. I had a long battle about him t'other night. The people of the world who most want the improvement of such a paper might convey to them, are all such perversi egri fanciulli, that they must indeed have aspersi di soavi liquore gl'orti del vaso, or they will never drink down the cordial. If he could get Lord Chesterfield * to write one small paper for him—But I say all this with fear and trembling, for after all he is the best judge of his own schemes. Humour and the manners of the world are not his fort.

* Lord Chesterfield and Dr. Johnson were not likely to have much friendly communication; Johnson's admirable Letter to him in answer to his recommendation of his dictionary is sufficiently known.

Do not you rejoice in the public infamy of that villainous forger Lauder *?

I do really now wish you would write a cheerful paper to the Rambler. Whether on Christmas merriment as laudable; and the town madness, and that of the age of continual joyless dissipation as illaudable—or on the hoops of these days, compared with those of the Tatlers, &c. and so on all sorts of caps, bonnets, aigrettes, coloured capuchins, &c. &c. &c. on drums—on the improvement, and misuse of the stage, and the French *comedies larmoyantes*,—or on any thing or nothing.

Adieu! this is most unconscionably long, but it must moreover carry you all our best wishes of a cheerful Christmas and happy new year, and many of both to you and all your family.

* The discovery of Lauder's forgery concerning the translation of Paradise Lost from the Latin, owing to the acuteness of the late Bishop Douglas. Johnson had in some degree countenanced Lauder, but he was a man of prejudice; he hated Milton's political principles, and wished to degrade his poetry.

Mrs. CARTER to Miss TALBOT.

Deal, *Dec.* 28, 1750.

I GREATLY rejoice, dear Miss Talbot, to find you persevere in so agreeable a manner of spending your time, and wish you perfect good health and good spirits to enjoy a cheerful Christmas. I extremely honour your defence of the Rambler, and heartily wish it was in my power to give him any assistance, but you have much too high an opinion of my capacity, as you will be convinced by the nonsensical thing I enclose, merely to shew you that I had rather make an imperfect attempt than seem to decline making any at all.

Did I never tell you any thing about Miss Mulso? O but I will, for she seems to be a person worthy your inquiry. Mr. Duncombe procured me the pleasure of her acquaintance during the race week we were at Canterbury, and I found her even more amiable than he had represented; she has an uncommon solidity and exactness of understanding, I was greatly charmed with her, and saw her as often as I could in the short time I was in Canterbury. I have since received two Letters

from her: and Mr. Duncombe has promised to shew me those she wrote to Mr. Richardson; he very kindly often gives me accounts of the clever people that fall in his way. He is an ingenious goodnatured man, and I love him so well, that I cannot for the life of me help wishing he was so happy as to be acquainted with you, for he has quite an enthusiastic fondness for merit.

One cannot help rejoicing in the prospect of such a character as Lady Grey's being perpetuated beyond the present generation, the only view in which the least solicitude about an heir appears to be in any degree reasonable.—As to my hero, I do not think it is possible for me to think or say any thing which Mr. Richardson, who thinks of more things and says more about them than any body, has not thought of before me; one distinguishing part of his character however must be an absolute superiority to false glory and false shame, the great snare of virtue, a steady opposition to the false maxims of the world in essential points, and a perfectly goodnatured compliance in trifles. Adieu! many many happy new years to you.

END OF VOL. I.

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